The Revolutionary Classroom: Education and State Building in Nasserist Egypt, 1952-1967

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Abstract

Soon after President Gamal Abdel-Nasser's rise to power in 1953, Egypt, a relatively uneducated country with a low literacy rate, became the largest exporter of education throughout the Middle East. The post-colonial environment of the Arab world called for a new power balance, and Egypt had begun exercising its soft power influence in the region. This thesis explores the growth and development of Egyptian education in the fifties and sixties. It deals with the intersection of ideology, governing philosophy, and education.

The first chapter observes Egypt's domestic system of education following the 1952 Revolution. It portrays the role of the state in defining and enforcing the Egyptian citizen's experience through tools of knowledge production, drawing on a variety of Arabic-language archival sources. The second chapter explores the exportation of this experience to the far reaches of the Arab world – the Eastern Arabian Gulf. It follows the politicized appointments of Egyptian teachers to Kuwait, the Trucial States, Qatar, and Bahrain. And it argues that, partially due to these teachers, Egyptian Arab nationalism pervaded the political atmosphere of the twentieth century Gulf.

This thesis addresses the inner workings of the Egyptian classroom during the fifties and sixties, tracing wider trends in Egyptian statecraft through the educational establishment. It unpacks the intellectual implications of Egypt's ideologically-pointed educational plan, arguing that the revolutionary government used modes of knowledge production to project the state's consciousness onto the mindset of the Egyptian citizen. It also displays the expansionist telos of this consciousness, following the trend of teachers exported as political state-builders throughout the surrounding Arab World.

Contents

List of Illustrations

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Introduction

From the earliest moments of his rise to power, renowned Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser focused much attention on the small-town schoolhouse. His electrifying speeches, championing an emancipated Arab citizen loyal to the cause of the Egyptian government, were greeted with frenzied crowds. In one such speech, given in 1953 at a school in lower Egypt, Nasser proclaimed: "every individual can accomplish much if he works in the interests of Egypt, forgetting himself and denying himself … we will not be able to remove the [colonial] usurper except by force, unity, and self-denial."[1] Focusing on the contribution of each individual to a greater cause, Egypt's revolutionary government demanded self-sacrificial allegiance and promised liberation as its reward. Schoolchildren responded to this message, which was disseminated by the state's educational system. Egypt's new regime rewrote textbooks, opened teacher training institutes, expanded policy concerning universal education, and even sent its teachers abroad to the surrounding Arab World. The schoolhouse had become the locus of revolutionary change.

One year before Nasser delivered this speech, he had helped execute a military coup d'état that dethroned Egypt's monarchical structure, claiming victory as the Free Officers' revolutionary movement. The overthrow of British-backed King Farouk's 16-year reign marked the end of foreign rule in Egypt. One of the first major military coups in the region, this movement began a new era in the history of Egypt and of the wider Middle East. The Free Officers' political philosophy opposed foreign intervention in the Arab world, critiqued the corruption of the Egyptian monarchy, and offered an authentic alternative to previous ruling

[1] Transcript of Gamal Abdel Nasser, *Kelemat al-Bakbashi Gamal Abdel Nasser fiy al-Meydan al-Was'a amam Madrasat Aja al-Thanawiyya bi-Damietta*, 09 April 1953, Bibliotheca Alexandria Archives.
All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

regimes. It envisioned an economically equitable society unified around the Arab identity and poised for development and production.[2] Soon after the revolution of July 1952, Gamal Abdel Nasser assumed the presidency, consolidating power and developing a framework of Arab nationalism, Cold War non-alignment, Arab socialism, and post-colonial emancipation. He innovated an Egyptian brand of Arab nationalism. This movement rejected the borders of the post-World War II Middle East and advocated true unification of the Arab nation – complete with political cooperation and geographical consolidation.

Much has been written about the shift of government power in this era, tracing the end of the monarchy, the rise of the "cult of Nasserism" and the subsequent structural changes in Egypt. The historical literature concerning Nasserism and the 1952 revolutionary period focuses on the issues of ideological framework, leadership charisma, third-world modernization, and anti-colonial resistance. These four categories have dominated the historical discussion of Nasserism, which dwindled after the 1970s.

Recent scholars, however, have begun to view revolutionary Egypt from new angles. Rather than maintaining focus on overt power shifts and governmental structure, the mid-twentieth century Egyptian state is increasingly portrayed as a "great social laboratory".[3] Simulating a state of crisis and revolutionary transition, Nasser was able to make sweeping changes, and much of what he changed was not merely structural. Fresh scholarship illustrates the varied origins of this period's rapid social change. In this vein, I will argue that education

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[2] Reem Abou-El-Fadl, *Foreign Policy as Nation Making: Turkey and Egypt in the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 101.

[3] Omnia El-Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 8.
This concept originates with Dr. Omnia El-Shakry, who seeks to illustrate the "discursive field mapped out by the contested ideological terrain of post-1952 Egypt", (206) in part by portraying the "relationship between the institutional structures underpinning knowledge production in… postcolonial Egypt and state sponsorship of such knowledge production" (14).

was a central tool in Nasser's statebuilding toolbox. The revolutionary regime used soft power structures to shape the ideology of the Egyptian people in the period after 1952. Using the educational system to instill revolutionary values in Egypt's students, the regime was crafting a new Arab individual – one who contributed to the needs of society, rejected the influence of colonial powers, and belonged to the unified Arab nation.

My inquiry is guided by several questions: Why was such emphasis placed on the domain of education in Egypt's revolutionary period? Why was the classroom deemed by the government as essential to the experience of every Egyptian citizen? What were the ideological messages being conveyed to Egypt's students and how were these messages expressed in the classroom? Looking to the Arab classroom setting outside of Egypt's borders – what was the impetus behind the post-revolution expansion of Egyptian teacher secondment? Should Egypt's educational influence be attributed merely to its uncontested educational superiority? Or was this influence politically calculated?

I have sought to answer these questions by consulting both Arabic and English primary source material. Rather than focusing on government policy and public speeches, I have explored the political undertones of the Egyptian state's soft power mechanisms. Dividing into two main sections, part one of this paper will address the expression of Nasser's etatist, Arab nationalist governing ideology within the domain of education, paying particular attention to Arabic-language source material. Focusing on state-published history curricula, United Arab Republic (UAR)[4] state yearbooks, the writings of contemporary Egyptian political commentators, state-published school songs, teacher and student memoir, and the testimony of revolution-era Arab

[4] The state of Egypt took on the name United Arab Republic (UAR) upon its 1958 union with Syria. Though Syria seceded from this union in 1961, Egypt kept the name UAR until 1971. Thus, throughout the majority of the chronological scope of this paper, Egypt's official name was the UAR.

educationalists, part one will demonstrate how the classroom was used to achieve the goals of the revolution. The second section of this paper will follow the expansion of the Egyptian educational agenda into the modernizing Eastern Arabian Peninsula. It makes use of teacher emigration statistics, Arab and Western news articles, British government intelligence material, first-hand accounts of political activity from the Eastern Gulf, messages from Cairo's *Voice of the Arabs* radio broadcast, UAR government documents, and Egyptian evaluation documents concerning the state of education in certain Gulf states. Part two argues that the Egyptian state played a politically calculated role in the foundation and development of the educational systems of these Eastern Gulf countries, impressing Nasserist Arab nationalism upon a generation of students throughout the Arab world.

The revolutionary classroom engendered a Nasserist worldview in the minds of Egyptian students. President Nasser was lauded, loyalty to the state was rewarded, and wholehearted resonance with revolutionary values was expected. The government's formidable presence stretched outside the borders of Egypt, making impressions on the schoolhouses of the Gulf through expatriate teachers. These teachers exported the Egyptian state's worldview across the Arab world. Education was used under Nasser's regime to mobilize and influence the area that was referred to as *al-umma al-a'rabiya* – the Arab motherland.

In the days of Egypt's past regimes, the profession of teaching had been marginalized, nearly deemed unskilled labor. But after the revolution, Egyptian teachers – both within Egypt and throughout the Arab world – were sent on a distinguished mission to spread the good news of Arab unification and hegemony. No longer merely caretakers, these employees of the government were given a higher purpose – the growth and success of the revolutionary Arab nationalist movement. Teachers had become an arm of the Egyptian state. Indeed, along with the

propagandistic Egyptian press and wildly successful *Voice of the Arabs* radio station, Egypt's most politically-motivated teachers made their mark on the young Gulf states. The gospel of Arab nationalism was celebrated in Egypt and exported abroad.

Chapter One: Revolutionizing the Egyptian Classroom

"... educational curricula must be reconsidered according to the principles of the revolution"[5] - Egypt's National Charter, 1962

In 1953, the year after the Free Officer's Revolution, the name of the Egyptian government's educational department was changed. *Wizarat al-Ma'arif*, the old name dating back to the Ottoman period, translates as the Ministry of Knowledge. It became known as *Wizarat al-Tarbiyya wa al-Ta'liim* — Ministry of Childrearing and Education.[6] This change was purposeful, signifying the state's new perspective on education. The term *tarbiyya*, added to the Ministry's name, is familial. It denotes childrearing, human development, and the cultivation of morals. With the rise of the revolutionary government, the classroom was transformed from a place of information transfer to a tool of knowledge and identity production. These developments within Egypt's educational establishment after the 1952 revolution were more than mere name change. The central goal of education had become *tathqiif abna' al-sha'ab* — the enculturation of the children of the nation's masses.[7] A philosophy of nationalism, collectivism, and Egyptian exceptionalism was undergirding these radical shifts in education. President Gamal Abdel-Nasser was attempting to define and enforce his vision for the state of Egypt. He aimed at the country's transformation — from struggling member of the third-world to sole leader of the "Arab circle".[8] The revolutionary government would attempt to impose these changes in national identity, political values, and world order through the Egyptian classroom.

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[5] Mahmoud Awad Taha, *Mithaq al-Thawra* (Cairo: Maktabat Jaziirat al-Ward, 1962), 183.

[6] I have chosen to translate the term *tarbiyya* as childrearing. Dr. Samy Ayoub has noted that the term does not have clear direct translation to English, but denotes "discipline, cultivating certain morals, bringing up". Its shades of meaning also denote a sense of oversight and responsibility.
Ahmed Isma'il Al-Hajji, *al-Tarikh al-Thaqafi lil-Ta'liim fiy Misr* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Araby, 2002), 292.

[7] Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 78-79.

[8] Gamal Abdel Nasser, *Egypt's Liberation: The Philosophy of the Revolution,* trans. Dorothy Thomson. (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1955), 85.

Despite the importance of education to Nasser's plan of national transformation, this aspect of Egypt's history is underrepresented among published works. Little has been written from within Egyptian society that analyzes the 1952 regime's educational reforms, providing historians with few beneficial sources.[9] Part of this is due to significant continuity in aspects of the educational system during the periods before and after the revolution.[10] Members of the Egyptian political establishment had been working towards the universalization of elementary education since the 1940's.[11] Though Nasser was seemingly following the example of previous educational reformers, he was not merely opening up new institutions of learning and training more teachers. Rather, he was reshaping and mobilizing Egypt's educational system to promote the government's ideological creed and further its statebuilding agenda. Egyptian schools became extensions of state control, aiming to instill students with personal loyalty to the ruling regime, increase national productivity, and strengthen citizen engagement in post-colonial Arab political pursuits.

The numbers alone point to a significant increase in government support for the educational establishment — during the thirteen years following the 1952 Revolution, total expenditure on education "is estimated at three times the entire expenditure on education over the seventy years from the British occupation in 1882 to the outbreak of the Revolution".[12] In addition to these budget increases, efforts were made to develop the content of the educational system soon after the Revolution. Amir Boktor, a professor of education at the American

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[9] Saʿīd Ismāʿīl ʿAlī, *Tajribat Thawrat 23 Yūliyū 1952 fī al-taʿlīm*, (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Thaqāfah lil-Ṭibāʿah wa-al-Nashr, 1983), 3.
[10] Ahmed Abdalla, *The Student Movement and National Politics in Egypt, 1923-1973*, (London: Al-Saqi Books, 1985), 101.
[11] Iman Farag, "A Great Vocation, A Modest Profession: Teachers' Paths and Practices," in *Cultures of Arab Schooling: Critical Ethnographies from Egypt* ed. Linda Herrera, Carlos Alberto Torres (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 113.
[12] Abdalla, *Student Movement and National Politics,* 101.

University in Cairo notes that "the most striking phenomenon in the evolution of education in Egypt under the present regime [United Arab Republic] is that of extensive expansion — expansion in budget, in number of schools, in teachers, in students, in organization and administration, in classes, in activities, and in curricula. This expansion has gone far beyond the corresponding increase of population."[13] The revolutionary regime prioritized education and its expansion. But despite its numerical growth, the quality of teaching in Egyptian classrooms continued to lag behind.[14]

Why was such emphasis placed on the domain of education in particular in the post-revolutionary period? Why was the classroom deemed by the government as essential to the experience of every Egyptian citizen? Prior to the revolution of 1952, Egypt's educational system had been influenced by foreign powers. Different languages, curricula, and values were espoused inside the classrooms of Egypt's schools. The British founded their first school in Egypt in 1815, establishing a century-long colonial legacy of private education. Though they were bastions of "the customs and traditions of their own respective nations", many Egyptian students attended these schools.[15] Foreign education had overshadowed Egyptian primary and secondary education for years, owing to missionary impetus and international funding. And previous to the influence of western powers, the Ottoman Empire had maintained political control over much of the Arab world, including Egypt.[16] However, during Egypt's nationalist revolution of 1919, the foreign education system began to be dismantled.[17] This earlier attempt at

[13] Amir Boktor, *The Development and Expansion of Education in the United Arab Republic* (Cairo: American University at Cairo Press, 1963), 5.
[14] Rushdi Labib, *Tārīkh wa-niẓām al-ta'līm fī Jumhūrīyat Miṣr al-'Arabīyah* (Cairo: Maktabat al-'Anjlū al-Miṣriyah, 1972), 222.
[15] Boktor, *Development and Expansion of Education*, 73.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Hussam Ahmed, in his article "Egyptian Cultural Expansionism", argues for "important continuity between Egypt's so-called liberal age and the Nasserite era that followed", portraying how the founding of Egyptian

educational independence resonated with the emancipatory post-colonial value system of President Nasser, for whom every foreign school was a symbol of heavy-handed external influence on the history of the Egyptian nation. Indeed, Nasser's revolutionary era was characterized by an "Egyptianization-Arabization process" that permeated the education system — increased supervision by the Ministry of Education required government approval of all courses, textbooks, and imposed seminars for the training of history and civics teachers.[18]

What was the ideology of Nasser's revolution, and how was it expressed in the everyday lives of Egyptian students? This chapter explores the etatist, expansionist nature of Nasser's government and identifies the pressure of these features on Egypt's educational system in the later part of the twentieth century. It will define Nasser's ideology and his plan for Egypt, and observe how the message of the revolution was promulgated inside the classroom.

Nasser's Revolutionary Ideology

The third world-centric, emancipatory rhetoric of Gamal Abdel-Nasser opposed all that Egypt's foreign-controlled education system represented. Nasser quickly gained a reputation as a visionary leader who was transforming Egypt, but his ideology was hard to define. Robert Stephens describes it as "an amalgam of nationalist and social, sometimes socialist, ideas."[19] The government's emphasis began at national independence and Arab unity, but eventually changed to questions of social change and economic development.[20] The state's political ideology adapted as Egypt's situation changed. Though Nasser's rise to power was seen by the Egyptian people as

educational institutes throughout the Arab world represented an expansionist political strategy established before the 1952 Revolution.

[18] R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Egypt Under Nasir: A Study in Political Dynamics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1971), 84.

[19] Robert Henry Stephens, *Nasser: A Political Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 253.

[20] Ibid.

a revolution driven by ideals, one could more accurately describe Nasserism as a flexible worldview set upon a framework of axioms.[21]

Nasser recorded his vision for Egypt in *Philosophy of the Revolution,* which reads like shallow rhetoric rather than political philosophy. In it, he lays out six fundamental revolutionary goals: putting an end to imperialism and its supporters; achieving social justice; eliminating feudalism; ending capitalist control of the government; developing a strong national army; and establishing a strong national democratic life.[22] To accomplish these goals, Nasser advocated for a radical shift in the Egyptian citizen's paradigm. Popularized through speeches, pamphlets, news articles, and textbooks, the revolutionary worldview sought to imbue citizens with a profound sense of national pride, optimism, and contentment.[23] The ideal citizen was clearly defined: industrious, mildly religious, and supportive of the government's endeavors. And this ideal citizen became the project of the educational system. Shaping students into "happy rural citizens" became an "explicit justification for educational extension."[24] Nasser placed his value framework at the center of Egyptian education, and crafted the system around himself as the ultimate representation of nationalism and Arab unity.[25] Therefore, one must first look into this value system before analyzing the success of its implementation in the classroom.

Firstly, Nasser's philosophy was future-focused. It centers on the importance of *tatawwur* (advancement) and *taqaddum* (development), stressing Egypt's need for industrialization and

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[21] Ibid.
[22] Laurie Brand, *Official Stories: Politics and National Narratives in Egypt and Algeria* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 35.
[23] Linda Herrera, "Islamization and Education: Between Politics, Profit, and Pluralism," in *Cultures of Arab Schooling: Critical Ethnographies from Egypt* ed. Linda Herrera, Carlos Alberto Torres (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 25-30.
[24] Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 78-79.
[25] Nasser was conceived of as the greatest Egyptian patriot and an example to be followed. Um Kalthoum sang *Ya Gamal, Ya Mithal al-Wataniyya*, which translates to 'O Gamal, O Ultimate Example of Nationalism', as a tribute to his presidency. This song was broadcast throughout Egypt and the entire Arab World through the government's *Sout al-'Arab* radio service.

modernization.[26] His rhetoric creates a set of epistemological categories by contrasting *al-rajia'aiyya* — backwardness — with the enlightenment of the revolutionary mindset.[27] Nasser supported the establishment of a new value system, characterizing it as a "social revolution" in which morality is reordered in line with socialist commitments and a secularist value framework. Nasser's rhetoric of state-planning is utopian, aiming at a state of constant societal equilibrium in contrast to the "self-suspicion, egoism, and hatred" of landowners in pre-Revolutionary Egypt.[28]

Contrasting with the "evils of past authority", Nasser portrays himself as the final revolutionary in a chain of leaders, following 'Urabi and Zaghloul in their attempts to lead the Egyptian people in "governing themselves", and becoming "masters of their fate."[29] He reshapes the history of Egypt with the July 23 Revolution as its apex. Yoav Di-Capua details the birth of "revolutionary historiography", demonstrating how Egypt's historians "treated the past as a mere series of analogies and metaphors whose object was to demonstrate the glorious achievement of the postcolonial moment of triumph."[30] Without a doubt, a teleological narrative of historical advance underlay the political rhetoric of the revolutionary period.[31] Portrayals of the victory of the revolution take on salvific tones, with Nasser taking on the role of messiah-like figure, leading his people into true enlightenment and restoration. Jesse Ferris notes that the messianic tones of Nasserism "tended to push Egypt into uncompromising positions of principle and

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[26] Kirk Beattie, *Egypt During the Nasser Years: Ideology, Politics, and Civil Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 117-118.
[27] Gamal Abdel Nasser, *The Philosophy of the Revolution,* trans. John Badeau. (Buffalo: Keynes & Marshall, 1959), 36.
[28] Ibid., 37.
[29] Ibid., 25.
[30] Yoav Di-Capua, *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past: Historians and History Writing in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2009), 249.
[31] Laura Bier, *Revolutionary Womanhood: Feminisms, Modernity, and the State in Nasser's Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 53.

fanciful overextension."[32] The future development of the country, is conflated with the success of Nasser's national plan. Revolutionary success will only be achieved when its values have been distributed throughout every Egyptian village.

Secondly, Nasser's philosophy was reactionary, focused on the relationship of the Egyptian people with their colonial past. His perspective pronounced judgement upon past occupation, and urged the Egyptian populous to unite in hostility toward values contrary to the government's. His vision for Egyptians demanded a collective rejection of all ideology that would oppose the revolution's. Nasser called for "a cultural revolution which will be hostile to imperialism, hostile to backwardness, hostile to feudalism, hostile to the domination and dictatorship of capitalism, hostile to all kinds of exploitation — a cultural revolution which aims informing the people...who their friends and enemies are."[33] These broad characterizations of categories like capitalism and exploitation allowed the Egyptian state to condemn all competing ideologies. In this framework, the state begins taking the place of the citizen's conscience, denouncing those values that would conflict with the ruling agenda. Omnia El-Shakry comments that the postcolonial Egyptian state had become "the embodiment of a rational consciousness."[34] The state's consciousness would, through modes of knowledge production, filter into the mindset of the Egyptian citizen.

Nasser's attempt to seed Egypt's culture with hostility to Western ideologies further distances any threat to the new order established by the revolution. Post-colonial Egypt had been swept up into the Nasserist metanarrative — Arab enlightenment as the source of progress and

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[32] Jesse Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble: How Intervention in Yemen Caused the Six-Day War and the Decline of Egyptian Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 12.

[33] Muhammed Anis, "Hawl Qadiyyat al-Taghayyur al-Thaqafi," *Al-Hilal* 9, (September 1967), 5.
[34] El-Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory*, 206.

capitalist domination as the reason for backwardness. Questions of cultural authenticity and lack of progress were answered, in Nasser's framework, by a triumphalist narrative in which the Egyptian people had finally claimed victory. This narrative upholds the power of the newly established government and rallies the people against any return of foreign influence.

Thirdly, as Gamal Abdel-Nasser's presidency progressed, Pan-Arabism became a central part of the Egyptian agenda. This was reflected at the local level in the increased focus on collective identity and shared national destiny. Thus emerged the new Arab man and woman — rational, productive, engendered with a sense of duty to the state. Denial of self and loyalty to the national collective identity were held up as virtuous attributes.[35] Ultimately, revolutionary philosophy called for the importance of societal homogeneity. Nasser explains that Egyptian society "will crystalize; its component parts will hold together; it will form a homogeneous entity", after a period in which the Egyptian people "strain our nerves during the period of transition."[36]

According to the Nasserist narrative, two simultaneous revolutions were ongoing in revolutionary Egypt — the political and the social. The political revolution stood for national sovereignty and self-determination, while the social revolution was a change of mindset, a "dilemma faced by many anticolonial nationalists".[37] This revolutionary philosophy had large aspirations. Under Nasser, Egypt began to claim greater international influence and responsibility, filling a power vacuum left by past colonial powers. Nasser began to pronounce Egypt's moral responsibility to reverse "the era of isolation", arguing that "every country must look beyond its frontiers to find out … what its positive role could be in this troubled world."[38]

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[35] Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 78.
[36] Abdel Nasser, *The Philosophy of the Revolution,* 52.
[37] El-Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory,* 203.
[38] Abdel Nasser, *The Philosophy of the Revolution,* 59.

More than just spreading development and resources, Egypt was responsible for spreading the ideals of the revolution throughout the greater Arab world. It became self-evident to Nasser that "there is an Arab circle surrounding us and that this circle is as much a part of us as we are a part of it, and that our history has been mixed with it and that its interests are linked with ours."[39] Egypt was central to the project of decolonization, and Nasser's vision held up the unified Arab Republic as the means of accomplishing that. Decolonization necessitated Egyptian dominance.

The rhetoric surrounding Arab unity is often connected to Egyptian influence and supremacy. In his *Philosophy of the Revolution*, Nasser explains the Arab "capacity for work" and the "strength of this bond which links us and which makes our territory one". Seeing the Arab world as unified, he then addresses the Egyptian people in particular: "Such is the first circle in which we must resolve and attempt to move in as much as we possibly can. It is the Arab circle."[40] The Arab circle was the domain in which the revolutionary government intended to consolidate influence.

Built upon these principles, the ideological revolution in Egypt was underway, following on the heels of the regime change in 1952. In the early sixties, Nasser turned leftward towards Arab socialism, taking a more heavy-handed approach to state planning.[41] He called for socialist training, explaining that "a big ideological battle is in the making at home and abroad", and ultimately urged that revolutionary councils would be established in every village to suppress "reactionary elements".[42] As a result of this shift, the state continued to consolidate power. Its ideology of planning set up a government-centered elite, establishing "a new class of experts,

[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 74.
[41] Jack Crabbs, "Politics, History, and Culture in Nasser's Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6, no. 4 (October 1975): 386.
[42] Beattie, *Egypt During the Nasser Years*, 159.

engineers, and intellectuals as both agents of modernization and its exemplars."[43] Egyptian society had been mobilized in support of the state.

When asked about political theory, Nasser replied: "our revolutionary application may be prior to the theory. Then what is the theory? The theory is the evidence of the action."[44] Tough to pinpoint, Nasser was unwilling to openly align himself with a philosophy of governance — neither on the stage of Cold War proxy conflict nor at the domestic level. Kirk Beattie writes that "the officer-rulers" of the July 23 Revolution "basked in the popularity of nationalistic, anti-imperialist, and Pan-Arab victories" but "failed to develop the ideological basis for a hegemonic bloc that defined their relationship to other political currents and social classes and justify their transnational authoritarian rule".[45] At its essence, the Free Officers' Revolution was a military coup-turned populist movement. This movement centered on Nasser as its hero whose leadership was calculated to centralize control and eulogize himself. The praise of Nasser, along with the core tenets of Arab unity and Egyptian exceptionalism, remained central to Egypt's new political doctrine.

Roel Meijer labels Nasser's rule an "authoritarian modernism", identifying the subtle transition of his regime from democratic reformism to a project-driven, state-focused "program of reform from above".[46] During Nasser's presidency, the state became omnipresent. Intervening among intellectuals, changing the structure of the job market, and even taking a role in family planning, the Egyptian government was shaping the minute affairs of its citizens.[47] The

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[43] Bier, *Revolutionary Womanhood*, 53.
[44] Quoted in Adel Abdel Ghaffar, *Egyptians in Revolt: The Political Economy of Labor and Student Mobilizations, 1919-2011* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 53.
[45] Beattie, *Egypt During the Nasser Years*, 148.
[46] Roel Meijer, *The Quest for Modernity: Secular Liberal and Left-Wing Political Thought in Egypt, 1945-1958* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 175.
[47] El-Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory*, 206-218.

development of this authoritarian rule was accomplished in part by the state's soft power structures. Omnia El-Shakry's analysis corroborates, challenging previous scholarship on the statebuilding technique of Nasser's regime. El-Shakry claims that "Nasserism was based on an assemblage of institutional apparatuses, technocratic practices, and modes of knowledge production, rather than simply on emotional appeals."[48] Under this concept of Nasserism, El-Shakry addresses several implications of the state's role after the July 23rd Revolution. Though she focuses on aspects of citizen affairs — social welfare, land reform, and labor activism — she leaves education out of the analysis.

Following El-Shakry's widened conception of Nasserism as a comprehensive national philosophy, I argue that the revolutionary regime made use of modes of knowledge production to confirm and consolidate power. As El-Shakry unpacks Nasser's "comparison of the state to a family that could not feed itself", I look into the similar microcosm of the classroom.[49] The national education system was one of the most powerful and effective tools in the revolutionary state's toolbox. The schoolhouse was central to the project of inculcating "revolutionary" ideals in the minds of Egyptian students.

In his booklet titled *Egypt's Liberation*, Nasser portrays his plan for education, the story of the Egyptian people, and the mission of the July 23 Revolution.

> "I do not want to claim for myself the role of a history professor; nothing could be further from my mind. But were any elementary school student to attempt a study of the struggles of our people, he would discover that the revolution of July 23rd

[48] Ibid., 199.
[49] Ibid., 214.

> marks the realization of the hope held by the people of Egypt since they began, in modern times, to think of self-government and complete sovereignty."[50]

Nasser intends that the glories and successes of the revolution would become self-evident to any elementary student. He would bring this vision to life throughout his presidency, shaping Egypt's system of education and creating a collective cultural history of the July 23 Revolution as a pinnacle of the country's past and a beacon for its future. Nasser's plan for the growth of the revolution relied upon the trajectory of education in Egypt.

Education: The Revolutionary Ideology Imposed

Nasser once wrote that: "Building factories is easy, building canals is easy, building dams is easy — but building men, that is the harshest difficulty."[51] His strategy for "building men", in large part, made use of education. In the eyes of Nasser, the classroom was the laboratory of ideology inculcation, teachers playing the role of statebuilder by shaping future citizens. One contemporary commentator wrote: "in the midst of this intellectual disorder, the school desires to raise individuals as citizens of their homeland, believers in its philosophy so that they can contribute to the life of the nation with all their hearts and with all their minds and with all their wills."[52] Faith in the revolutionary regime was stirred up in the Egyptian schoolhouse. The government was constructing the ideal citizen, wielding a system of state planning that transcended literacy statistics. Children — Egypt's students — were viewed as the "human raw material of the future".[53] All that had been laid out in the revolutionary ideology — the

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[50] Quoted in *The Modern Middle East: A Sourcebook for History*, ed. Camron Amin, Benjamin Fortna, and Elizabeth Frierson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 74.
[51] Gamal Abdel Nasser, *Speech on Ministry of Land Reclamation* (1969), quoted in Diane Singerman and Paul Amar, *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Globalized Middle East*, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2009), 75.
[52] ʻAlī, *Tajribat Thawrat 23 Yūliyū 1952*, 32.
[53] Elie Podeh and Onn Winckler, *Rethinking Nasserism: Revolution and Historical Memory in Modern Egypt*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 23.

importance of Arab unity, an attitude of post-colonial freedom, the value of work and productivity — was being impressed upon students with the aim of producing the ideal Arab citizen. Rather than giving the student skills, the teacher was imbuing him with values. Rather than empowering him as an individual, the teacher was encouraging a collectivist mindset.[54]

The 1963 UAR yearbook explains the state's perspective on education: "Since the very first day of its inception the Revolution has had great faith in the value of education, and regarded it as the true weapon of the revolutionary will."[55] Through rote memorization of passages, textbook and curriculum changes, and even the songs of schoolchildren, the Egyptian government was consciously creating wholehearted citizen-believers.[56] In 1952, mere months after the July Revolution, the newly established Free Officer regime attempted its first comprehensive, involved reorganization of the educational system.[57] While promoting literacy, Egyptianization, and modernization within schools, the "new governing elite" was also using the school to produce a society "alive to its national responsibilities, not to mention the revolutionary tasks ahead of eventually building a socialist society and political system."[58] Each student would play a part in achieving the goals of the revolution. Through the school system, citizens were endowed with a sense of ownership and responsibility for the future of Egypt, which would blossom into full-fledged support for the regime.

Egyptian educationalist Sa'id Isma'il Ali explained in *The Experiment of the Revolution in Education* that the principles of the Revolution must be taught in the classroom "because education and childrearing are the two things that shape the people and their mentalities, skills,

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[54] Crabbs, "Politics, History, and Culture in Nasser's Egypt," 387.
[55] *United Arab Republic 1963 Yearbook*, (Cairo: UAR Information Department, 1963), 155.
[56] Abdel Ghaffar, *Egyptians in Revolt,* 65-66.
[57] P.J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt: from Muhammed Ali to Mubarak,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 474.
[58] Ibid.

and wills with which they desire social change and shape it".[59] After the overthrow of Egypt's monarchy, the regime's goal translated into cultural overhaul and authority consolidation. The educational system was utilized to imbue the student with an understanding of "the needs of society, the requisites of the age, the goals of nationalism, which the student will face after he leaves school and truly becomes a citizen."[60] Collectivism, contribution to national development, and societal awareness were prioritized in schools. The classroom was used to mobilize Egyptian citizens with the ideology of the revolutionary regime. Education had become focused exclusively on engendering social change in line with the values of the revolution.

Under the revolutionary government, teachers were no longer merely charged with equipping individuals with the skills needed to build productive and fulfilling lives. Rather, their job became distinctly political. The apolitical academic was urged to descend from his "ivory tower", to "participate" in society, and to play his part in instilling a "socialist mentality".[61] Educated Egyptians in general were chided for being slow to divest their minds of "everything ...which depends on the capitalist mentality, camouflaged behind [the concept of] the inviolability of individual freedom and the legend of 'Art for Art's Sake'".[62] For Nasser's government, every pursuit was political. Freedom of thought was squelched for the sake of collective enculturation. Arts were de-emphasized while scientific research, development, and production were incentivized.[63] According to Louis Awad, the regime was enforcing "the persecution of the theoretical sciences for the sake of applied sciences in the name of

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[59] 'Alī, *Tajribat Thawrat 23 Yūliyū 1952,* 28.
[60] Ibid., 29.
[61] Muhammad Saqr Khaffajah, "Jami'atuna fi 'Aman", *Al-Majallah al-Misriyyah li'l-'Ulum al-Siyasiyyah,* no. 28 (July 1963): 132-3.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Crabbs, "Politics, History, and Culture in Nasser's Egypt," 387.

development".[64] Modes of knowledge production had become systems where students learned the social values of the revolution and were shaped into productive contributors.

Training manuals for students in teacher education programs defined religious education as 'spiritual development' (*al-namw al-ruhi*). Attempting to achieve a "balance between personal piety and mass mobilization", these manuals encouraged future teachers to provide children with sound doctrine and religious commitment, while preparing them for working life in the local environment.[65] Teachers were encouraged to instill in the pupil "devotion to the milieu in which he lives, loving and having pride in it, and not looking down on it." They were also tasked with instilling pride in the greater Arab nation and preparing the child for life in "a cooperative, ...socialist society."[66] Contentment and cooperation were central values to the revolutionary regime, encouraged by teachers within the classroom.

Though teachers played the role of statebuilder in the classroom, educational historian Mohamed Abu El-Asaad criticizes the treatment of educators during the revolutionary era. He questions why "we leave the fingerprints of capitalism and feudalism on one hundred and twenty thousand [teachers] when we are asking them to bring up our new generations according to the ideas, principles, and goals of socialism?"[67] The school had become a place of ideological incubation. Egyptian teachers served the purposes of the regime's brand of socialism.

Though the profession of teaching was traditionally scorned in Egypt, it was elevated by the revolutionary government.[68] Under this new regime, the teacher was playing an important

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[64] Louis Awad, *Thaqāfatunā fī Muftaraq al-ṭuruq* (al-Qāhirah: Maktabat al-Shurūq al-Dawlīyah, 2004), 40.
[65] Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 78.
[66] Alyas Barsum Matar, Hasan al-Hariri, Muhammad Mustafa Zaydan and Sayyid Khayr Allah, *Al-Madrasa al-Ibtida'iyya* (Cairo: Maktaba al-nahda al-Misriyya, 1966), 17-18.
[67] Iman Farag, "A Great Vocation, A Modest Profession: Teachers' Paths and Practices," in *Cultures of Arab Schooling: Critical Ethnographies from Egypt* ed. Linda Herrera, Carlos Alberto Torres (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 113.
[68] Ibid.

role in the ongoing cultural revolution. Sarhan El-Demerdash, Dean of Education at Ain Shams University during the sixties and participant in Nasser-era Teachers' Institutes, wrote: "Thousands of teachers are needed for undertaking this noble mission…. Teachers need to be educated to meet local needs and to meet the needs of other countries".[69] The importance of teaching to the shaping of society had been recognized by the regime, and thus the profession was elevated. Contemporary accounts note that, in many villages, the teachers or headmasters participated in committees set up as local manifestations of Nasser's mass political party, the Arab Socialist Union. These teachers were particularly active in using schools for political indoctrination.[70] Even if teachers in certain villages were not particularly politically motivated, "schools up and down the Nile Valley rang daily with the shouted chant "Nasser! Nasser! Nasser!" along with the repetition of revolutionary slogans."[71]

During the revolutionary period, a classroom pedagogy of rote learning and memorization was emphasized. James Mayfield, an American diplomat who conducted educational fieldwork in Egypt in 1966, recalls visiting village schools in which students proudly recited "portions of Nasser's speeches" and were trained to "shout...a word symbolizing some aspect of the regime's ideology" upon entering the classroom.[72] The school day was saturated with political rhetoric. The technique of rote learning was so prevalent and deeply ingrained that it left its mark on the universities. An analysis of the Egyptian educational establishment notes that: "in Egypt the emphasis remains upon formal lecture, and students are accorded little opportunity for discussion, questioning, or meeting with the professor ...Students resort to

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[69] Sarhan El-Demerdash, "Teacher Education and In-Service Training in the Arab Republic of Egypt," in *Education and Modernization in Egypt*, ed. Yusuf Kotb (Cairo: Ain Shams University Press, 1974), 173.
[70] Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 79.
[71] Ibid.
[72] James Mayfield, *Rural Politics in Nasser's Egypt: A Quest for Legitimacy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 152.

cramming and memorising... the textbook." Students were heavily dependent upon textbooks, not seriously evaluating their accuracy.[73] Kuwaiti educationalist Darwish Al-Miqdadi criticized Egypt's educational program for these reasons, claiming that it aimed at "cramming facts and passing examinations" without considering "the broader aspects of education, with the health and discipline that should go along with it."[74] Critically-minded inquiry into history, political science, and the other humanities was discouraged. Instead, a narrative published by the Ministry of Childrearing and Education was considered sufficient classroom knowledge.

School curricula was the primary method of defining Egypt's statehood and the role of the Egyptian citizen. From the very beginning of the revolution, the re-writing of curricula — especially history books — was recognized as a top priority for the new regime.[75] Materials were published that endeared Nasser and his philosophy to the Egyptian student. Religious books were changed, developed to emphasize the regime's principles of governance and encouraging wholehearted citizen participation in the political project. The Arabic language was increasingly central to the revolutionary classroom, strengthening the collective Arab identity and de-emphasizing foreign education. These new curricula were generally deemed to contain "little serious discussion of social or political problems, but a great deal of propaganda and historical mythology".[76]

Textbooks generally established a triumphalist narrative, glossing over dingy periods in Egyptian history. An author of one of these texts, when asked why the textbooks chapters barely treated four centuries of Ottoman rule in the Arab East, claimed that the Ottoman age should be

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[73]Abdalla, *Student Movement and National Politics*, 113.
[74] "Development of education: activities of British Council, 1952", June 02, 1952, The National Archives, FO 1016/218, 30.
[75] Brand, *Official Stories*, 37-38.
[76] Malcolm Kerr, "Egypt", in *Education and Political Development*, ed. James Coleman (Binghamton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 182.

left out because it is a dark period in Arab history. He had decided to treat only the brighter periods.[77] The curricular philosophy of this particular author was characteristic of the entire governmental apparatus. Nasser's regime paid significant attention to the curricula at schools and universities, reformulating textbooks and assigning government documents as part of the agenda. The National Charter of 1961 itself became a school textbook, declaring that "... educational curricula must be reconsidered according to the principles of the revolution".[78] Egyptian students were encouraged to learn the Charter by heart.[79]

One critic of Nasser's regime ridiculed the perception of the National Charter as "a holy book!", explaining that "it was taught at schools… and became a curriculum to pass or fail" and claiming that "the Qur'an was not honored in the same manner".[80] The revolutionary regime was impressing its governing principles upon students as unquestioned religious dogma, not mere political theory. Former student activist Ahmed Abdallah recalls: "The subjects of the 'social curriculum' were firmly politicized and written in a highly demagogic language that mingled national pride with political loyalty to the regime."[81] No criticism of the Arab nation, past or present, was permitted. Indeed, critics of the regime claimed that the school curriculum had become a system of myth propagation.

Religious education was also greatly affected after the July 23 revolutionary regime change — the classroom was presented with a socialized version of Islam.[82] In his analysis of religion throughout the 1952 Revolution, Rif'at Sayyid Ahmad writes that according to Nasser,

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[77] Ibid.
[78] Abdalla, *Student Movement and National Politics,* 116.
[79] Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 79.
[80] Ibrāhīm 'Abduh, *al-Dimuqratiyya: bayna shuyukh al-hara wa magalis al-taratir* (Cairo: Sijil al-Arab, 1979), 153, quoted in Abdalla, *The Student Movement*, 255.
[81] Abdalla, *Student Movement and National Politics,* 116.
[82] Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 79.

"religion, like history and heritage, exist merely to be benefitted from and represent the strength of the future-oriented Arab Nationalist movement."[83] Religion had become the government's tool of value enforcement. The regime began to shape religious rhetoric around "values like faith, patience, justice, and destiny, transforming religion from an outward battle to inward experience and personal emotions" creating "a connection between doctrine and the accelerated economic and social changes".[84] After the 1952 Revolution, the mandatory religious education program was rewritten, with new Islamic studies textbooks released in 1958-59. These books presented a regime-mandated perspective on Islam, introducing students to an Islamicized set of "social values necessary to a popular reconstruction of society by the masses: sincerity, fulfilling obligations, forbearance, and the rights of the nation".[85] There was a marked increase in classroom discussion of the value of *jihad*, which was framed "for ideological purposes against external enemies like the new state of Israel."[86] The teaching of religion became a tool for enforcing the regime's values.

Several books were published by the Ministry of Childrearing and Education that eulogized recent political events under the new regime. One of these books, titled *The Battle of Freedom*, commemorated Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal. Used in the classroom, the first half of this book was dedicated to a glorified retelling of the event. The second half, titled "Goals of the Battle", speaks directly to students, using second person plural. It calls the student to "resume your studies today with *jihad* in the battle to share in the victories of the future", fusing the student's daily work with the state's grand destiny. The book even presents songs of praise for the nationalization of the canal: "Praise God, God is great! O Egypt, you were

[83] Rif'at Sayyid Aḥmad, *al-Dīn wa-al-dawlah wa-al-thawrah*, (Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, 1985), 78.
[84] Ibid, 99.
[85] Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 78.
[86] Ibid.

protected from shame and disgrace! You were protected from the trap of the deceiving colonizer!".[87] The religious and anti-colonial rhetoric of Nasserism merge together to create a value framework for the student, which bases itself in the strong-armed state. *The Battle of Freedom* also addresses teachers, lauding them as "the armor of the motherland" and encouraging them to "continue, and strengthen, and increase in steadfastness".[88] The ultimate purpose of both the student and the teacher is the strengthening and shaping of the *watan* - fatherland - within the bounds of the defining framework of the ruling regime.

Education became increasingly characterized by ritualized appreciations of the revolutionary program. One book published by the Ministry of Childrearing and Education in 1960 titled *School Songs for Middle School* typifies the educational philosophy of the revolutionary government.[89] The book's introduction presents the Ministry's goals for the songbook: "Students are prone by nature towards chanting and singing.... We can take advantage of this tendency in their training and education...and push them towards political movement and activity".[90] Every aspect of education was utilized to encourage a revolutionary mindset. The songs included in this book were purposed to "affect nationalistic excitement and clarify the landmarks of Arab Nationalism, or glorify working with one's hands,... or connect with the important events that have happened in politics or economics."[91] The songs are varied; some religious anthems, others celebrations of Arab unity and patriotism. Bearing titles like "Arab Unity", "My Brother in Algeria", "My Principles", "Army and Revolution", and "Armament", these songs are expressions of political and moral allegiance.

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[87] Kamal al-Diin Hussein, *Ma'rakat al-Hurriya* (Cairo: Dar al-Hina, Wizarat al-Tarbiyya wa al-Ta'liim, 1956), 184.
[88] Ibid., 186.
[89] *al-Anāshīd al-madrasīyah lil-marḥalah al-iʿdādīyah* (Cairo: Wizārat al-Tarbiyah wa-al-Taʿlīm, Idārat al-Buḥūth al-Fannīyah wa-al-Mashrūʿāt, 1960), 5.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., 7.

Image 1. *School Songs for Middle School, 1960*

These school songs were also intended to demonstrate the formal Arabic language, called *al-lugha al-fasiha*. They are described as "a tool to draw students to the formal standard Arabic and make accessible its flow on the tongues of students".[92] Conceptualized by Nasser as the language that unifies the Arab peoples, Arabic became a central focus of education during the revolutionary period. The renaissance of the classical arabic language was referred to as a "linguistic revolution" that paralleled the political one.[93] The increased emphasis on both Modern Standard and Egyptian Arabic was informed by the emancipatory post-colonial focus of

[92] Malcolm Kerr, "Egypt", in *Education and Political Development*, ed. James Coleman (Binghamton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 193.
[93] *Al-Anāshīd al-madrasīyah lil-marḥalah al-iʿdādīyah*, 7.

Nasserism. Arab unity and anti-colonialism were two sides of the same coin, both enforced by the study of the Arabic language.

The 1952 government was left relatively unchallenged in its attempts at ideology enforcement through the classroom. However, a few critics of the regime spoke out concerning the state takeover of the Egyptian classroom. Tawfiq Al-Hakim, author and playwright, wrote *The Return of Consciousness*, a scathing critique of Nasser and the 1952 revolution. In it he spoke against the regime's interference in the classroom, describing how "schoolbooks in the hands of the young so enormously inflate the glories of the revolution that one sniffs the aroma of falsification and flattery, and the very same books leave bright pages from the history of other eras in the shadow of the unconscious."[94] History had been politicized in favor of the ruling regime. Louis Awad notes the ahistorical nature of post-revolution textbooks: "history books in our schools are no more books of history. They are rather books of pure politics… The young Egyptians have lost their sense of history and, consequently, their sense of politics."[95]

As Egypt's history was being rewritten, so was its political landscape. The few intellectuals who spoke out against government intervention in the classroom were removed from their university posts.[96] The revolutionary government interfered significantly within Egyptian higher education system. The implications of this interference do not fall within the scope of this paper. It is, however, important to note the extent to which free, liberal thought was silenced by the Free Officers regime. The liberal Egyptian intelligentsia wilted in the period following the Free Officers' Revolution.[97] In the 1965 analysis of the state of Egyptian education in the Social Science Research Council's *Education and Political Development,* it is noted that

[94] Tawfiq al-Hakim, *The Return of Consciousness* (London: The MacMillan Press, 1985), 53.
[95] Abdalla, *Student Movement and National Politics,* 115.
[96] Ibid., 116-118.
[97] Di-Capua, *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past,* 272-278, 282-283.

"what [intellectuals] suffer from is not exclusion from power, but censorship and the heavy-handed tendency of the regime to regard all intellectual activity as simply another resource to mobilize."[98] The intellectuals that remained after the regime's purge were loyal to Nasser, not daring to critique developments in Egyptian education. Education was no longer an academic pursuit — it had become a means to the end of political loyalty and homogenization.

Nasser, in his public political speeches, emphasized the role of the teacher as statebuilder, designating the school as Egypt's "origin of strength,". According to Nasser, the school was not established "merely for education", but to achieve the "goals of the revolution". A speech given at the opening of a new school in 1954 designates it as "the first building of the educational revolution".[99] The Egyptian schoolhouse was to be the origin of a social transformation, a project that "mobilizes every individual to achieving his dreams" by "building the collective and not the individual".[100] The Egyptian classroom had been transformed into a social laboratory that was producing supporters of the revolutionary agenda.

Student testimony demonstrates the effectiveness of this transformation. Mahmoud Faksh, an Egyptian secondary school student during the 1952 Revolution, recalls:

> "It would be safe to assume that the ceaseless efforts to bring about identification with the regime have been somewhat successful. My classmates and I developed a strong sense of identification and pride with Arabism, anti-colonialism, and a nationalist leader of Nasser's caliber. On different occasions, as the government deemed necessary, we were able to express these feelings and attitudes by

[98] Kerr, "Egypt", 193.
[99] Gamal Abdel Nasser, *Khatab al-ra'iis Gamal Abdel Nasser,* Part Two (Cairo: Mataab'a Majlis al-Khidmat, 1954), 289.
[100] Ibid., 291.

> demonstrating in support of regime causes and against anti-regime causes, domestic or foreign."[101]

The regime's intervention in the classroom truly affected the worldview of Egypt's students.

As Nasser's plans for Egypt took shape, the regime's plan for the educational system was not limited to the domestic sphere. The Middle East Institute's report on *Education and Science in the Arab World* claimed that "whatever happens in Egypt in the field of education affects the entire Arab world".[102] As Egypt established its role as regional leader, the goals of the revolution began to rapidly spread throughout the Arab world. A contemporary report observed that the United Arab Republic (UAR) had "stepped forward to assume its role in leading the development of life in the other Arab countries as well as in African and many Asian countries", leading to its "undertaking many responsibilities, the most important of which is spreading education in the countries that are in need of it."[103] By mobilizing the individual with his worldview, Nasser was preparing the country of Egypt for impact on the world stage. As the next chapter will display, the Egyptian classroom expanded throughout the Arab world, spreading Nasserism throughout the Arab circle and shaping the formation of the surrounding modern Middle Eastern regimes. The telos of the revolutionary philosophy was expansionist, and the mid-twentieth century classrooms of the Arabian Gulf bear witness to this.

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[101] Mahmud Faksh, "The Consequences of the Introduction and Spread of Modern Education: Education and National Integration in Egypt," *Middle Eastern Studies* 16, no. 2 (May 1980): 42.
[102] Fahim Qubain, *Education and Science in the Arab World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), 197.
[103] El-Demerdash, "Teacher Education and In-Service Training in the Arab Republic of Egypt," 173.

Chapter Two: Exporting the Egyptian Revolution

> "We have recently had a very unpleasant experience of the intervention in politics by these [Egyptian] teachers and there is no doubt that they have an influence harmful not only to us but to local Rulers and ancient Arab traditions."[104] - Bernard Burrows, British Political Resident in Bahrain

In the period following the July 23, 1952 Revolution in Egypt, an ideology of state planning was on the rise. Arab Socialism was enforced as part of President Nasser's plan for a new Egypt — the new regime initiated mass nationalization projects, expelled foreign-owned companies, and introduced stringent land reforms. State control was similarly exercised over the determination of citizens' career paths. Job quotas were written, teacher institutes were opened, and rapid development became the ultimate goal. With the numerical growth of enrolled students, teachers were in high demand within Egypt's borders. Despite this, increasing amounts of Egyptian teachers were being seconded to a variety of countries, from Eritrea to the Trucial States.[105]

The demand for Egyptian teacher secondment should be partially attributed to the superiority of Egypt's modern education system. A 1976 *Al-Ahram* article commented: "It is no coincidence that Egypt should outpace its brethren Arab states in civilization, for when Muhammad Ali embarked on the building of the modern state in Egypt and sent out academic missions to Europe, the Middle East had not yet awakened from their slumber."[106] Like this columnist, many Egyptian academics, historians, and teachers of his generation were characterized by a sense of educational superiority. Egypt did boast a significant educational

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[104] "School teachers for Persian Gulf", October 11, 1957, The National Archives, FO 371/126998, 19.
[105] *Al-Ahram*, July 11, 1956, quoted in "Material and correspondence relating to 'Egypt's Empire Builders', 1957," Elizabeth Monroe Collection, GB165-0207, Box 1, File 3/4, Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony's College, Oxford.
[106] Hussein Fawzi Al-Najjar, "al-A'mila al-Misriya fiy al Kharij, Kayf Nastathmirha wa Nahmiyha min ayy Ghabn?," *Al-Ahram*, July 17, 1976, 9.

establishment with a long history (in comparison to its Middle Eastern counterparts). From the perspective of the Free Officers regime, Egypt's academic establishment was destined to bring the lagging Arab states into its greatness. British Residency reports from the Gulf region agreed that "Egyptians, whatever their politics, are at least qualified to teach."[107]

Nevertheless, the noteworthy growth of teacher emigration after the 1952 revolution points to more than just external demand. In 1952, 998 Egyptian teachers were seconded throughout the Arab world. By 1960, this number had tripled to 3,008, and the next year it had grown to 3,520.[108] The rapid increase in emigration cases was exclusive to teachers. Teachers, specifically, were being exported by the state. What was the impetus behind this radical expansion of teacher secondment? Was there more to Egypt's influence on the region than its uncontested educational superiority? To what extent was this exportation of teachers a vessel for the spread of the government's political-ideological agenda? This chapter will argue that, more than simply distributing resources, the revolutionary Egyptian government promoted a Nasserist, Pan-Arab ideological bent through its teacher emigration programs. Sparked by a revolutionary internationalist impetus, teachers were sent forth to proclaim the message of anti-colonial, Arab-centric deliverance. This message spread in the small desert towns of the Eastern Arabian Peninsula.

Of course, attempts had been made in the realm of education before the 1952 revolution to promote Egyptian culture in both the eastern and western Arab world, characterized by *Nahdawi* aspirations.[109] However, I will argue that Egypt's government educational secondment programs took on a fuller political purpose after the revolution.

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[107] "School teachers for Persian Gulf", 36.
[108] *Education in the Arab States* (New York: Arab Information Center, 1966), 271-295.
[109] Hussam Ahmed, "Egyptian Cultural Expansionism: Taha Hussein Confronts the French in North Africa," *Die Welt Islams* 58, no. 4 (2018): 409-441.

The historical record of the Eastern Gulf at this time lacks clear documentation of mid twentieth century political activity.[110] Historians must work mainly with competing narratives — the Pan-Arab perspective versus that of the British protectorate. Both of these narratives confirm that the spread of Nasserist ideology by way of the classroom was a central feature of mid-twentieth century Egyptian foreign policy. In the Arabian Gulf, — the last stronghold of British imperialism in the Middle East — Egypt's combination of Pan-Arab ideology and expansionist etatism was deeply effective. The migration of Egyptian workers throughout the Arab region legitimized Egypt's newly established regime.

The expansionist element of Egypt's foreign policy was not defined immediately after the Free Officers Revolution. Rather, there occured a "shift in revolutionary action from the domestic to the international stage [that] was accompanied by a parallel redirection of ideological development whereby Egyptian nationalism evolved into Pan-Arabism."[111] Pan-Arabism, the belief in a sovereign Arab community centered upon shared culture, language, history, and territory, was eventually embraced and co-opted by the Free Officers regime, providing a pretext for political outreach.[112] Various historians have discussed the impetus behind this outreach, naming oil wealth, anti-Western sentiment, and even Gamal Abdel-Nasser's personal desire for power. Though different forms of Arab nationalism had emerged earlier in the twentieth century, the movement was increasingly conflated with Egyptian sovereignty. This chapter will look specifically at the soft-power tools used by the revolutionary Egyptian government to package and punctuate Nasser's ideology for the rest of the Arab world.

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[110] I designate the Eastern Gulf as the Trucial States, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar.
[111] Dekmejian, *Egypt Under Nasir*, 405.
[112] Kristi Barnwell, "Overthrowing the Shaykhs: The Trucial States at the Intersection of Anti-Imperialism, Arab Nationalism, and Politics, 1952-1966," *The Arab Studies Journal* 24, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 78.

It will focus on the mass-exportation of teachers from Egypt to the Gulf states, and evaluate the political implications of this educational Egyptianization.

Arab Unification: Nasser's Pan-Arab Aspirations

Throughout the fifties, Nasserist rhetoric concerning the greater Arab world was evolving. Egypt's responsibility to the surrounding "Arab nation" became a central feature of the political agenda starting in 1954 and increasing throughout the decade.[113] Nasser began to use the term *qawmiyya 'arabiyya*, Arab nationalism, frequently in public speeches beginning in 1956.[114] This timeline is supported by a survey of Egyptian influence in the Arab World conducted by the British Foreign Office, which indicated that Egypt's "drive to extend her influence in the Middle East and Africa" had not begun in earnest until 1954.[115] The concept of the *umma*, a united Arab nation which featured frequently in Nasser's later speeches, was taking shape in the years after the 1952 revolution.

When Pan-Arabism began to loom larger on the Egyptian agenda, a shift in rhetoric occured. Jack Jankowski emphasizes the phrases eventually used in Nasser's speeches to "illustrate the practical reasons for Arab nationalism and unity": "protective armor," a "weapon employed against aggression", and the fulfillment of "common interests".[116] Egypt was in the position to protect and advocate for its fellow Arab nations, and uniting under the same banner would guarantee that protection.

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[113] Talal Al-Rashoud, "Modern Education and Arab Nationalism in Kuwait, 1911-1961," (PhD diss., SOAS University of London, 2017), 269.
James Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 32.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., 53.
[116] Ibid.

Pan-Arab ideology did not begin with Egypt, nor did it begin with the revolution. Its first manifestation hails from the Arab conferences in 1931, 1937, and 1938, situated in Jerusalem, Bloudan, and Cairo, respectively. And though Cairo had long since emerged as a central player in this Arab nation, Egypt was by no means the unquestioned leader. In 1942, Egypt took further steps to "identify herself with the Arab movement" which culminated in the formation of the Arab League in 1946.[117]

The ideology of Pan-Arabism "frequently was all things to all men", appearing in the early twentieth-century Levant, the era of Arab Revolt in the Hejaz, and the later rise of Ba'athism in Syria and Iraq.[118] Though Nasser was not the prime mover of Pan-Arabism, he rebranded it and lent it a popular force. Pan-Arabism, which became undoubtedly "the most dynamic political force in the area" was given a distinctly Egyptian flavor throughout the Arab world in the late fifties, eventually reaching the Gulf and resonating with local movements toward independence.[119] ALESCO, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, was effectively another tool in Egypt's toolbox. As one Western contemporary observed, "Egypt takes an active part in this vast network of cultural exchange, her professors and education experts making valuable contributions. ... the possible trend is that Egypt will become increasingly involved with [ALESCO], which is in harmony with so many of her declared aspirations and policies."[120]

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[117] Elizabeth Monroe Collection, GB165-0207, Box 1, File 2/4, MECA, Oxford.
[118] Rashid Khalidi, "Perceptions and Reality: The Arab World and the West," in *A Revolutionary Year, the Middle East in 1958*, ed. Wm. Rodger Lewis and Rodger Owen (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2002), 205.
[119] *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960*, Volume XII, Near East Region, ed. Glenn W. LaFantasie and Edward C. Keefer (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1993), 17.
[120] Georgie D.M. Hyde, *Education in Modern Egypt: Ideals and Realities* (Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1978), 210.

Several other Arab political institutions were centered upon Egypt's leadership. The Arab League, the Association of Arab Graduates, and many similar organizations were "ostensibly Pan-Arab but in reality Egyptian-inspired and Egyptian-dominated."[121] Arab League headquarters were located in Cairo and its Secretary General was an Egyptian.[122] Much has been written on Egyptian predominance in the Arab League, displaying the near-unquestioned authority of Egypt's post-revolution regime.[123] Indeed, Arab League offices opened in the Gulf region in the mid-fifties, parallel to the Egyptian state's increased interest in that region.[124]

The formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958 incarnated Nasser's philosophy of Pan-Arabism. This new state united Egypt and Syria, achieving a great victory for Nasser: "Today Arab nationalism is not just a matter of slogans and shouts; it has become an actual reality".[125] The ultimate goal was a united Arab front, with Egypt in its rightful place as leader. The Arab world was promised protection in uniting, Nasser claiming that "it is not possible to assure [the Arabs'] security save if united with all of their brothers in Arabism in a strong cohesive unity".[126] Nasser's revolutionary message claimed the allegiance of every Arab and resonated deeply with disenchanted citizens throughout the Middle East.

Though the American security apparatus had less suspicion of the UAR than did the British, both governments were aware of the shifting power balances in the Middle East. In the midst of ongoing Cold War proxy conflicts, Egypt was being watched carefully. In the Gulf, "Egyptian influence...was greatest in the less developed countries of the Arabian Peninsula,

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[121] Elizabeth Monroe Collection, GB165-0207, Box 1, File 4/4, MECA, Oxford.
[122] James Onley, *Britain and the Gulf Shaikhdoms, 1820-1971: The Politics of Protection* (Qatar: Center for Regional and International Studies, 2009), 17.
[123] Tawfig Hasan, *The Struggle for the Arab World* (London: KPI Limited, 1985).
[124] Onley, *Britain and the Gulf Shaikhdoms*, 16.
[125] Derek Hopwood, *Syria: Politics and Society 1945–1990* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1990), 40.
[126] Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt*, 32.

where Egypt was the preeminent external influence in the mid-1900s."[127] Playing on the popular resentment of British colonial presence, Nasserism was taking hold. The influence of *The Voice of the Arabs*, a radio station broadcast across the Arab world, was deemed a legitimate destabilizing force in the Gulf. Speeches from Cairo, which were "beaming throughout the Arab world through the Egyptian propaganda machines, had considerable impact… on the man in the street."[128] Every Arab was aware of Nasser's growing role on the world stage. Adeed Dawisha demonstrates the linking of the Arab nationalist creed "in the minds of the Arab people to the person of Gamal Abdel Nasser."[129] Owing to the charisma of Egypt's president, this slogan was increasingly used: *al-Umma al-'Arabiya min al-Muhit al-Atlasi ila al-Khalij al-'Arabi* – the Arab nation from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Gulf.[130] The eastern edges of the Arab world were included in the unified fervor that possessed the region.

Egyptian sources portray a familial posture towards Arab countries. Playing the role of *al-shaqiqa al-kubra*[131] — the older sister — the Egyptian state had the best interest of its siblings in mind. According to the Egyptian narrative, Nasser was destined to lead his fellow Arabs out from darkness and confusion. At this moment, "the Arab world yearned for development and Nasser yearned for regional leadership," providing a perfect platform for Egypt's regional emigration policy. Gradually, this policy "became a central component of realising Egyptian leaders' aspiration to become *primus inter pares* within the Arab world".[132]

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[127] Ibid., 56.
[128] Hasan, *The Struggle*, 28.
[129] Adeed Daweesha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 123.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Gerasimos Tsourapas, "Nasser's Educators and Agitators across al-Watan al-'Arabi: Tracing the Foreign Policy Importance of Egyptian Regional Migration, 1952-1967," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 3 (2016): 327.
[132] Ibid., 328.

The unification of the Arab world was about far more than sisterhood among nations — "Egypt's hegemonic aspirations were disguised by, and sometimes confused with, the promotion of revolutionary ideals."[133] Egyptian expansionism was on the rise, perfectly justified by the resounding message of Pan-Arabism. At the inauguration of *The Voice of the Arabs*, Cairo's wide-ranging radio station, Free Officer Mohammed Naguib commented: "We are as greatly concerned with Arab questions as we are with our own."[134] Of course, Arab questions were often met with an Egyptian solution.[135] Questions arose: is this movement genuinely about Arab emancipation, or is it concerned with Egyptian domination? What is motivating the Egyptian government's interference in the everyday lives of Arabs throughout the region?

British correspondent Elizabeth Monroe addresses these questions in a private memo that designates *The Voice of the Arabs* as "the Egyptian propaganda machine, speaking in the name of 'Arabism', calls incessantly for Arab unity against the West, and provides a platform for Arabs of all nationalities who are opposed to European influence in the Middle East." She criticizes this rhetoric as "Egyptian-inspired and Egyptian-dominated."[136]

By admission of Nasser himself, the Egyptian state agenda was not solely driven by friendliness towards fellow Arab states. Nasser claimed that, for Egypt, "The part to be played is, first of all, that of a 'liberator'".[137] Egypt was the self-proclaimed leader in the emancipation of the colonized world, both the smaller Arab circle and the larger third world. Nasser explained that, because "every Arab-speaking country is our country", it must be liberated, "whether

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[133] Ferris, *Nasser's Gamble,* 11.
[134] Elizabeth Monroe Collection, GB165-0207, Box 1, File 4/4, MECA, Oxford.
[135] Hasan, *The Struggle*, 28.
[136] Elizabeth Monroe Collection, GB165-0207, Box 1, File 4/4, MECA, Oxford.
[137] Walter Z. Laqueur, *The Middle East in Transition: Studies in Contemporary History* (New York: Routledge, 1958), 137.

willingly or perforce".[138] Whether or not the Arab world desired it, Egypt claimed a responsibility to project its influence. The Nasserist state was developing an ideology of Egyptian expansion under which liberation was synonymous with Egyptian takeover.

President Nasser used Pan-Arabism as "a counteridentity, a "shield" against Western imperialism, a symbol of independence, a means to achieve Egypt's hegemony over the Arab world, and perhaps an economic opportunity to transfer some of the huge oil revenues of the Gulf states to the benefit of the Egyptian people."[139] All kinds of state objectives were fulfilled by the adoption of this ideology. During the height of Nasser's power, British correspondent Elizabeth Monroe observed: "President Nasser… remarked that a solution [to Egypt's predicament was] ...control over some major source of energy."[140] The "unification of the Arab nation from the Ocean to the Gulf" would fulfil that objective. Oil revenue was an appealing possible result of Arab unification. Nasser was using Pan-Arabism as a tool to consolidate and replace power structures throughout the Arab world. Egypt's Pan-Arabism was replacing one colonizing power with another.

It is commonly represented that the Nasser-era exportation of Egyptian teachers to the Gulf "was an important gesture of solidarity promoting pan-Arabism, and a sign that Egypt remained the cultural centre of the Arab world."[141] But the sheer expansionist nature of mid-twentieth century Egyptian statecraft is often overlooked. Kuwaiti scholar Talal Al-Rashoud has uncovered the political "indoctrination in the classroom" that took place in the Gulf's schools during the heyday of Egyptian Pan-Arab activity. He writes that Egyptian expatriate teachers

[138] Ibid.
[139] Podeh and Winckler, *Rethinking Nasserism*, 29.
[140] Elizabeth Monroe, "Egypt's Empire Builders", *The Economist,* April 27, 1957, 289.
[141] Howaida Roman, "Emigration Policy in Egypt," *Robert Schuman Centre For Advanced Studies*, 2006, 1.

were "active in disseminating Nasserist ideology in the schools".[142] Education was meant for much more than simply reaching Egyptian citizens. It was meant to cement Nasser's plan for the uniting of the Arab world. Egypt was quickly becoming schoolmaster of the greater Arab nation.

Though the Gulf is a wide region, its countries may be studied together because of similarity in culture, development, timeline, and political formation. Throughout the Gulf, "education had become a race with time, and it had a nationalistic motivation."[143] President Nasser, pursuing a more active diplomatic relationship with the Gulf states in the late fifties, took advantage of the region's budding desire for education to advance elements of his political agenda among the Arab nation.

The UAR-Gulf Political Relationship

According to British assessment, the United Arab Republic's foreign policy sought to "achieve its objectives through cultural and educational means".[144]

President Abdel Nasser's frequent meetings with leaders of the Gulf states dealt, in part, with the sending of *ba'athat* — delegations — of teachers from Egypt to various schools in the far Eastern Arab world.[145] These *ba'athat* were symbols of cooperation between Egypt and its sisters in the Gulf — useful to the goals of both nations. Alongside the provision of teachers, the Egyptian Cultural Mission to the Gulf was established, promoting Egyptian music, films, literature, and newspapers in an effort to increase Egyptian influence amongst Gulf Arab youth.[146] In an atmosphere of Arab nationalism and anti-Westernism, the rulers of the Arab Gulf,

[142] Al-Rashoud, "Modern Education and Arab Nationalism in Kuwait," 304.
[143] Muhammad Morsy Abdallah, *The United Arab Emirates: A Modern History* (London: Croon Helm, 1978), 143.
[144] "US policy in Persian Gulf", November 29, 1962, The National Archives, FO 371/162783, 131.
[145] Arif al-Sheikh, *Tariikh al-Ta'liim fiy Dubayy* (Dubai: UAE Ministry of Information and Culture, 2004), 301.
[146] Onley, *Britain and the Gulf Shaikhdoms*, 17.

were seeking support. This desire for involvement meant that Egypt's agenda for unification, development, and education could move forward.

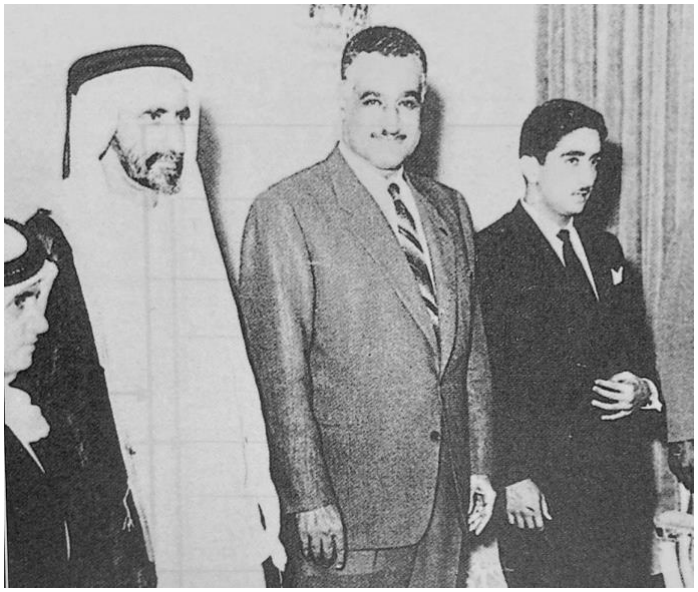

Image 2. *The Sheikh Rashid bin Sa'iid (second Prime Minister of the UAE) with his son Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid visiting President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1959.*

Several of the Gulf Arab sheikhs and leaders were influenced by the amiability of Egypt. Only three years after Egypt's revolution, Sharjah's Sheikh Saqar bin Sultan al Qasimi asked President Nasser to send an educational delegation to his emirate.[147] The first Egyptian educational delegation to Sharjah was made up of two people, but it soon grew, other delegations taking root throughout the Emirates. Emirati historian Arif Al-Sheikh recorded: "the speeches of the great leader Gamal Abdel Nasser and and his repeated appeals found acceptance with the people of the Gulf and the Emirates, and particularly the Sheikh Saqr bin Sultan, who was influenced by Arab nationalism more than other leaders in the region."[148] These delegations

[147] Arif Al-Sheikh, *Tariikh al-Ta'liim fiy as-Sharjah* (Sharjah: Al-Qasimi Publications, 2016), 145.
[148] Ibid.

generated immediate political fervor, their arrival remembered as an “uproarious [Arab] nationalist tide from Egypt”.[149]

After Sharjah’s reception of the first delegation of Egyptian teachers, the Emirate organized a state visit with President Abdel Nasser. During the visit in 1957, Prince Khalid bin Sultan al-Qassimi, brother of the ruler of Sharjah, reaffirmed his “love and the love of the entire people of Sharjah for Egypt and her President, who have restored to the Arabs their dignity.” The Prince praised Nasser: “No wonder that President Abd al-Nasir is the leader who has lit the torch of nationalism in Asia and Africa. We shall never forget Egypt, which stands today and will continue to stand forever for our defence."[150] Nasser was seen as a liberator, protector, and an inspiration. Thus, the state of Egypt was an example to follow in the Gulf’s progression towards nationalism and decolonization. The rhetoric of shared destiny and mutual loyalty between Egypt and the Gulf had reached its height.

[149] Ibid., 89.
[150] “Political relations between states in Persian Gulf”, September 28, 1957, The National Archives, FO 371/126916, 197.

Image 3. *President Gamal Abdel Nasser presents Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Vice President of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of the Emirate of Dubai, with the Order of the Nile, Egypt's highest state honor*.

Through the fifties, the United Arab Republic was accelerating its programs of cultural and educational exchange, with specific focus on the Arab world. By the school year 1959-60, there were 14,349 foreign students studying in Egypt, 2,259 of them studying at the expense of the Egyptian government. Added to the loaning of thousands of teachers to a total of 20 countries, Egypt was expending significant resources to provide education for citizens of the Arab, African, and Muslim spheres.[151]

Image 4. *The newspaper caption reads: "In Cairo, Wednesday, December 20, 1961, at the presenting of credentials of the first ambassador to the UAR from Kuwait. Depicted is Mr. 'Abd al-'Aziz Hussein, ambassador to the state of Kuwait, presenting his credentials to distinguished President Gamal Abdel Nasser."*

[151] Boktor, *Development and Expansion of Education,* 13.

Though not directly affiliated with Egypt, left-wing Arab nationalist political and cultural movements were clearly influenced by the Pan-Arab political current. Arab nationalist clubs emerged during the fifties, the most prominent located in Sharjah and titled *al-Urubah* (Arabism). From this club came the region's first local, nationalist press, inspired by Egyptian publications.[152] In Kuwait, the Teacher's Club was reported to be full of Egyptophiles.[153] Egypt had great influence over formal and informal political organizations throughout the Gulf region. And political events in Egypt made waves in the Gulf – in 1956, when Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal and called for the support of Arabs, the *Lajnat al-Andiyya al-Kuwaitiyya* (The Committee of Kuwaiti Clubs) convened a "popular conference" in solidarity with Egypt.[154]

The shadowy Front for the Liberation of Occupied Eastern Arabia (FLOEA) also emerged during the fifties, an "underground teacher-led nationalist group" that seems to have claimed a significant number of student members.[155] Many of the authorities of the National Front in Dubai were intimately connected with Egypt – one of its leading members, Kuwaiti Saif bin Hamed bin Ghurair, donated about 40,000 rupees to Nasser's Egyptian Arms Fund.[156] National Front radio propaganda in 1956 adhered to the Pan-Arab perspective, demanding active opposition of imperialism in the Gulf: "Your country is part of the Arab World. Get up from your sleep and contact all your relatives from Dhofar to Qatar . . . Rest assured that you are not an ignorant country and that you belong to the progressive Arab world." The broadcast hailed Nasser as a prime model of resistance, commanding listeners: "Join hands and listen to President Jamal Abdul Nasser who has said in the Egyptian constitution that Egypt is a part of the Arab

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[152] Abdallah, *The United Arab Emirates*, 147.
[153] Al-Rashoud, "Modern Education and Arab Nationalism in Kuwait," 256.
[154] Ibid., 292.
[155] Christopher Davidson, *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success* (London: Hurst, 2008), 42.
[156] Christopher Davidson, "Arab Nationalism and British Opposition in Dubai, 1920-66," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 6 (November 2007): 887.

world and a progressive country."[157] Egypt was an important consideration to the political framework of both official Gulf state actors and underground political fronts.

All of this took place amid the tension of the Arab Cold War — a conflict between newly-established Arab republics (led and represented by Nasser of the UAR) and traditionalist kingdoms. The Eastern Gulf nations were caught in between, their neighbor Saudi Arabia emphasizing Islamic identity and national sovereignty to the exclusion of Pan-Arabism.

The dispersion of Egyptian teachers into the Gulf region awakened the previously isolated inhabitants of the Gulf to the wider problems of the Arab world. Egypt itself embraced its self-endowed responsibility to further Arab socialism, claiming a "legitimate appeal for freedom, socialism, and the unity of all people of the Arab Nation."[158] Nasser's regional policy included all Arabs and became deeply important to the political scene of the modernizing Gulf states.

Egyptian Teacher Emigration to the Gulf

Much of the writing on immigration and emigration patterns of mid twentieth century Egypt characterize the state as entirely unfocused on the movement of its population. Ali Dessouki writes that "it is difficult to speak in terms of a migration, or even a population policy in Egypt until the early sixties."[159] Much of the study of Egypt's population movement focuses on the seventies, which experienced an unprecedented boom in the emigration of middle-class professionals.[160] Though there was a "lack of a coherent and concrete set of objectives" to Egypt's migration policy in the early fifties, the state's usage of resources for teacher

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[157] Ibid., 888.
[158] Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 29.
[159] Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, "The Shift in Egypt's Migration Policy: 1952-1978," *Middle Eastern Studies* 18, no. 1 (January 1982): 54.
[160] Suzanne Messiha, "Export of Egyptian School Teachers: A Cost-Benefit Analysis," (PhD diss., American University in Cairo, 1983), 29.

secondment points to a set of unstated objectives.[161] The emigration of teachers from Egypt to the surrounding Arab world was noteworthy in comparison to the emigration of other skilled workers. Beginning in earnest in 1954, teacher emigration preceded the mass migration of Egyptians to the Gulf for employment in the oil industry by several generations, incentivized by the Egyptian government rather than the draw of oil-rich salaries.[162]

In general, emigration of Egyptian citizens was frowned upon. The "the antagonistic attitude of the government towards migration" was "revealed through its imposition of many barriers."[163] In an increasingly controlled economy, Egyptian workers did not necessarily enjoy freedom to seek out international job opportunities. Egypt had a burgeoning population of students and a newly established policy of universal elementary education, thus teachers were in high demand.[164] Between school years 1953/1954 and 1965/1966, primary school enrollment had increased by 145%. General secondary school enrollment had increased by 127%. And university enrollment had increased by 130%.[165] Egypt was in need of teachers at every level.

Nevertheless, the numbers point to a rapid influx of Egyptian teachers in the Gulf starting in the mid-sixties. Though Egypt imposed restrictions on immigration, its policy on emigration of workers in the education sector was an intentional exception to the rule. The scope of teacher secondment programs may have even had adverse effects upon Egypt's domestic quality of teaching. Negative effects on local education were noticed when teacher migration increased.[166] Egypt's revolutionary government was willing to sacrifice in order to broadcast its agenda throughout the wider Arab circle. The Ministry of Education's five year plan, published in 1963,

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[161] Dessouki, "The Shift in Egypt's Migration Policy," 54.
[162] Abdallah, *The United Arab Emirates*, 143.
[163] Messiha, "Export of Egyptian School Teachers," 32.
[164] Abdalla, *Student Movement and National Politics*, 101.
[165] Abdel Ghaffar, *Egyptians in Revolt*, 64.
[166] Ibid.

anticipated sending an additional 1,500 teachers to "other Arab countries" in the year 1964-65 alone.[167] Michael Engman argues that Egypt's willingness to "cover...the cost of their seconded professionals is evidence that the expected gains were more related to increases in Egypt's political capital than prospective remitted savings."[168] A British correspondent reporting on the Gulf in the sixties deemed it noteworthy that "the Egyptian teachers who are on loan from the Egyptian Ministry of Education receive their salaries from the Egyptian government".[169] This policy provided Arab governments with a powerful incentive to staff their schools with Egyptians.[170] Domestically, the Egyptian government needed teachers for its schools, but it deemed teacher secondment worth the investment — the means to a political end. But for the fledgeling Gulf schools, any teacher was a welcome commodity.

Egypt's Seconded Teachers in the News

The Arab news sources take note of Egyptian teacher secondment to the Gulf throughout the fifties and sixties. An article published in *al-Gomhuriya* titled "Saudi Arabia to Have 1350 Egyptian Teachers for the 1957-58" reports a significant presence of both seconded and independently-contracted Egyptian teachers in the Saudi kingdom. The article notes that "Egypt believes that it is her duty to help her sister Arab states to develop their education and learning," stressing the country's felt obligation to aid the surrounding Arab sphere. It adds that, for the Gulf nations, "development will not be achieved unless Egypt supplies these states with their

[167] Boktor, *The Development and Expansion of Education*, 10-11.
[168] Michael Engman, "Half a Century of Exporting Educational Services," *Groupe d'Economie Mondiale* (Fall 2009): 13.
[169] Elizabeth Monroe Collection, GB165-0207, Box 1, File 4/4, MECA, Oxford.
[170] Ralph, R. Sell, "Egyptian International Labor Migration and Social Processes: Toward Regional Integration," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22, no.3, (1988): 89.

needs for teachers at any cost."[171] From the Egyptian perspective, the provision of teachers was a charitable, neighborly act.

Another article in *Sabah al-Khair*, an Egyptian weekly publication, focuses specifically on Kuwait. Its author, the paper's editor, had just returned from a trip to deliver a lecture in Kuwait. His article, published in 1957, depicted Kuwait as a politically active society — "Every political trend is represented in Kuwait. Nationalism, communism, Arabism, socialism, etc". It also called for an increase in these trends, claiming that "the first necessity in the political sphere is to strengthen Arab nationalism in Kuwait."[172] The Egyptian government bloc was in full support of the spread of Pan-Arab ideology, viewing it as the key to post-colonial freedom.

However, the geopolitical significance of Egyptian teacher secondment was not missed by Western journalists and politicians, who often colored "Egyptian diplomatic missions abroad" as "subversive activities with the object of fomenting pro-Egyptian feeling in the countries to which they are accredited."[173]

British assessments tended to identify "a toxic combination of education, technology and foreign domination in fomenting Arab nationalism".[174] British and American news sources commented significantly on the emigration patterns of Egypt's teachers. One noteworthy article by British journalist Elizabeth Monroe in 1957 dubs these teachers "Egypt's Empire Builders," claiming that their influence on the Arab world was "just as potent" as that of "Egypt's best known instruments of propaganda", namely "Cairo radio and illustrated weekly magazines".[175] She characterizes the Pan-Arab movement as a disguised Egyptian power-grab, claiming that the

[171] Elizabeth Monroe Collection, GB165-0207, Box 1, File 4/4, MECA, Oxford.
[172] "Internal political situation in Kuwait", April 25, 1957, The National Archives, FO 371/126899, 54.
[173] Elizabeth Monroe Collection, GB165-0207, Box 1, File 4/4, MECA, Oxford.
[174] Dina Rezk, *The Arab World and Western Intelligence: Analysing the Middle East* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 66.
[175] Monroe, "Egypt's Empire Builders", 289.

"'greater Arab nation' under Egyptian management has an instrument ready in hand — the schoolmaster for a new school, not to mention the inspector for the school systems as a whole."[176] Though she admits the diversity of perspective in Egyptian emigrants, she explains that they are "interspersed with members of Egypt's Cultural Mission — men and women glib with patter from Cairo's Ministry of National Guidance and capable… of injecting into the tincture of disloyalty to the local ruler or government." Of course, the British perspective was naturally antagonistic to competitors for power in the Gulf, the final stronghold of the Crown's influence in the Middle East. The close of Monroe's article calls for a "pooling of thought by educationists from both the independent oil countries and the West — for both have an interest in widening the choice of candidates for schoolmastership in the Arab world." This scathing assessment of Egyptian intentions attracted the attention of foreign powers, displayed in Ms. Monroe's articles and correspondences.

The American press also took note of Egyptian trends in the Arab world. Foreign correspondent Sam P. Brewer wrote that "Kuwait is heavily infiltrated with Egyptian influence", and that this "influence is strong among the younger elements of the population". Brewer concluded that British involvement in Kuwait is agreeable to both parties, and characterized Egypt as one of the "less endowed countries that covet [Kuwait's] wealth."[177]According to American and British sources, Egyptian teachers were being sent with an overt political agenda. Many memoirs and personal records from the mid-nineteenth century Gulf region note the volume and intensity of political activity conducted by seconded government employees.

Missionaries of the UAR: Egypt's Teachers in the Gulf

[176] Ibid.

[177] Sam Pope Brewer, "Cairo Propaganda Stirs Kuwait, but State's British Tie is Strong: Oil-Rich Sheikhdom's People Oppose Sharing of Wealth Despite Arab Sympathies Many Egyptian Teachers," *New York Times*, March 15, 1957, 4.

The Egyptian state program of teacher secondment was central to spreading the Free Officers' revolution. Titled *nizam al-ia'ara lil-kharij*, or *intidab al-mudarrisiin*, this program was an intentional effort to establish the values of the regime throughout the Arab world. Government documents promoting Egypt's plan for education remark that "since the blessed revolution began on July 23, 1952," the Egyptian regime has sought to "provide the opportunity for every Arab citizen to know his potential and build up his nation," because "unity of thought is the way to Arab unity."[178] These seconded Egyptian teachers had undergone "courses of environmental service, the study of Arabic society, socialism and the 1952 Revolution and camps in the teachers colleges."[179] They had also participated in "special programs for teachers delegated to teach in other Arab, African, and Asian countries."[180]

Every seconded teacher was thoroughly vetted by Egyptian authorities, required to obtain an exit visa with a three-year expatriate period. They all signed contracts, promising loyalty to the Egyptian government and the intention not to "undermine the development goals of Egypt". [181] Though these teachers went abroad to serve the government of a different Arab country, the Egyptian government expected full loyalty to its regime and demanded the contribution of expatriates to its national development goals. It was suspected by the British that "when these teachers take up their appointments abroad, they are expected to remain under the control of the local Egyptian representative."[182] Sources from Sharjah confirm that, "Egypt paid the salaries of her teachers", and "all of the members of the [Egyptian] educational delegation's salaries and

[178] *al-Ta'līm al-'ālī fī 12 sanah, 23 Yūlyah 1952, 23 Yūlyah 1964* (Cairo: United Arab Republic Wizārat al-Ta'līm al-'Ālī, 1964), 163.
[179] El-Demerdash, "Teacher Education and In-Service Training in the Arab Republic of Egypt," 174.
[180] Ibid., 177.
[181] Dessouki, "The Shift in Egypt's Migration Policy," 62.
[182] Elizabeth Monroe Collection, GB165-0207, Box 1, File 4/4, MECA, Oxford.

travel tickets were funded by Egypt at that time." This practice continued throughout the fifties as a steady partnership.[183]

The Egyptian system of teacher secondment was frowned upon by the British, who lamented "the same bad old system of being seconded and paid by the Egyptian Government, to whom they [seconded teachers] would alone be responsible."[184] Under the Free Officer government's secondment system, teachers were ideologically vetted and trained, tested for loyalty to the regime, and kept dependent on it throughout their time abroad. Though not all Egyptian teachers were staunch supporters of Nasser (some were affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, others simply not politically involved), a great number were promoting his ideology of Arab unity.[185] One Egyptian headmaster was expelled for making an inflammatory pro-Nasser speech at a political rally in Bahrain.[186] Egyptian teachers were incentivized to send students to Egypt and encouraged to promote the regime's ideology in the classroom. Elizabeth Monroe wrote: "As well as supplying sister Arab countries with teachers, Egypt encourages them to send students to Cairo, where these feelings of militant pan-Arabism are developed."[187]

In some cases, these Egyptian teachers in the Gulf were suspected of conducting covert political activity on behalf of the Egyptian government. One Emirati recalls that the Egyptian Educational Mission in Dubai was suspected of coordinating espionage, possibly infiltrated by intelligence officers who actively incited political demonstrations.[188] Throughout the fifties and sixties, Egyptian clubs were established by Egyptian embassies throughout the Gulf, which

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[183] Al-Sheikh, *Tariikh al-Ta'liim fiy as-Sharjah*, 150.
[184] "Development of education: activities of British Council, 1952," 30.
[185] Monroe, "Egypt's Empire Builders", 289.
[186] Al-Rashoud, "Modern Education and Arab Nationalism in Kuwait", 256.
[187] Elizabeth Monroe Collection, GB165-0207, Box 1, File 4/4, MECA, Oxford.
[188] Easa Saleh Al-Gurg, *The Wells of Memory* (London: John Murray, 1998), 96.

maintained Nasserist political activity.[189] The Egyptian Cultural Mission to the Gulf was mounting – in 1956 the Mission had no one in Qatar, by the next year it had six. In 1956 the Mission had 290 in Kuwait, by 1957 there were 400.[190] The Gulf was being flooded by Egyptian cultural and educational influence.

Egypt's financial provision for its seconded teachers was overtly politicized – they were offered bonuses by the Egyptian government which rewarded the teaching of pro-Nasser content. A UAR document details the allocation of "prizes for a total of five thousand pounds to stimulate… teachers to address these national issues, and to add new ideas to be considered, and to open areas for research and analysis so that the concepts of the new society may deepen in the hearts of young men, among the sons of the Arab nation."[191]

A publication of the UAR's Ministry of Higher Education titled *Higher Education in 12 Years*, published on the 23rd of July, 1964, details the sending of teachers as emisarries – *muba'athiin*. One section titled "The Competition of the Emissaries" describes the participation of children of Egyptian emigrants in a game-show competition in which they answered questions connected with Arab nationalism "to link them with their beloved homeland and the developments taking place in it."[192] This book also details the UAR's provision of knowledge about both Egyptian and Arab matters to students around the Arab world, incentivizing "the provision of references on national issues to young people" by holding a "competition to write books for university and institute students on: The July 23 Revolution, Arab nationalism, and

[189] Elizabeth Monroe Collection, GB165-0207, Box 1, File 4/4, MECA, Oxford.
[190] Onley, *Britain and the Gulf Shaikhdoms*, 17.
[191] *al-Ta'līm al-'ālī fī 12 sanah,* 166.
[192] Ibid.

Arab socialism."[193] Teachers were encouraged to spread the values of the Egyptian revolution in addition to Pan-Arab ideology.

Egyptian politics featured openly inside the classroom, some schools in Dubai even displaying pictures of President Nasser on their walls.[194] One class was trained to salute the picture, shouting "Down with colonisation and long live Jamal!"[195]

Much of the curricular material taught in Gulf schools was Egypt-centric. Nasserist influence was widespread, seeping into higher levels of educational departments in Gulf governments. Isma'il Al-Qabbani, the most influential Egyptian post-revolution educational theorist, traveled around the Gulf with other Egyptian education specialists to provide training and suggest curriculum. His speech was "saturated" with "Arab nationalist ideology", pointing to the conflation of Arab and Egyptian nationalism that was present in educational materials starting in the late fifties.[196] In his comprehensive educational recommendation report written for Kuwait, Al-Qabbani recommended an emphasis on "reading and the Arabic language", "history books", "geography", and "nationalistic childrearing".[197] Each of these categories encourage a significant focus on the shared heritage of the Arab world, promoting a Pan-Arab approach through the curricula. This Pan-Arab approach was, of course, tinged with Egyptian territorial nationalism.[198]

This Egyptian influence on Gulf schools' curricula did meet some opposition. Kuwaiti Nationalist Darwish Al-Miqdadi criticized the Egyptianization of curricula, explaining that

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[193] Ibid.
[194] Davidson, *Dubai*, 42.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Al-Rashoud, "Modern Education and Arab Nationalism in Kuwait," 269.
[197] Ismaʿil Al-Qabbani and Mattaʿ Aqrawi, *Taqrirʿan al-Taʿlim bi-l-Kuwait* (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-ʿArabi, 1955), 104-109.
[198] Muhsin Khudr, *al-Ittijah al-Qawmi al-ʿArabi fi al-Taʿlim al-Misri 1952-1981* (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al- Misriyya al-ʿAma li-l-Kitab, 1992), 89.

"students must be taught about Arab society in general, and Egyptian society specifically on the basis that it is part of Arab society."[199] Al-Miqdadi also opposed the appointment of Egyptian teachers, claiming that "such people as the Egyptian government would send… would not be good men."[200] However, the Egyptian curriculum was, in the end, maintained in Kuwait's schools.[201] Kuwaiti Director of Education, Abdul Aziz Hussein, was known to have been influenced by Egypt's ideology. British records explain that "he [Hussein] and the whole education department have been very seriously affected by the Suez incident and continue to be almost wholly subject to Egyptian influence".[202]

Describing the beginnings of formal education in the Gulf, Sheikha Al-Misnad wrote: "the school curricula in the Gulf States" were "initially based on the Egyptian system of education".[203] Egyptian textbooks were considered the best of those produced in the Arab world. Egypt's educational system was the standard – Egypt's standardized test, the *Tawjihiyya,* was widely used throughout the Gulf. Students who passed it graduated with an Egyptian certificate.[204]

This overt political activity did not go unopposed. The Saudi Arabian monarchy perceived Nasser's extended hand in the Gulf as an attempt to grab at the region's energy sources and topple the existing power balance. Indeed, Nasserist Egypt "constituted a direct threat to the ruling systems in the Gulf".[205] Saudi's regime openly opposed Nasser, receiving in turn his moralistic condemnation. In 1962, he denounced the Saudi and Jordanian monarchies: "the shoe

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[199] Al-Rashoud, "Modern Education and Arab Nationalism in Kuwait", 215.
[200] "Development of education: activities of British Council, 1952," 30.
[201] Al-Rashoud, "Modern Education and Arab Nationalism in Kuwait," 222.
[202] "School teachers for Persian Gulf", 16.
[203] Sheikha Misnad, *The Development of Modern Education in the Gulf* (London: Ithaca Press, 1985), 65.
[204] Ibid., 91.
[205] Khaldoun Hasan Al-Naqeeb, *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula: A Different Perspective* (London: Routledge, 1990), 128.

of every Egyptian soldier is more honorable than the crown of King Saud and King Hussein".[206] Exerting powerful influence over the smaller Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia's regime stood as a counterweight to Nasser's Arab nationalism, opposing the UAR's efforts from Yemen to Kuwait.

Alternative political interests from outside the Gulf similarly opposed the primacy of Nasserism in the region. Palestinian and Jordanian teachers had begun emigrating to the Gulf in the late forties, carrying their own political agendas distinct from Egypt's brand of Arab nationalism.[207] However, despite the disapproval of various Gulf governments and the lack of political homogeneity among teaching staff, Egyptian teachers undoubtedly made an impact. The younger Gulf states' "manpower needs...buttressed the position of Nasser's Egypt as supplier of highly trained, albeit deeply politicised, professionals".[208] Starting in the fifties and continuing throughout the sixties, overwhelming numbers of Egyptian teachers rendered the Nasserist agenda the most powerful voice in the schools of the Eastern Gulf.

Political Culture in Gulf Schools

The politicizing activity of Egyptian teachers fanned the flames of Arab nationalist fervor, igniting students' opposition to British occupation. Emirati Easa Al-Gurg recalls that the British "readiness to intervene, in pursuit of their own ends, in the management of our society… was greatly resented."[209] The popular resentment of British intervention paved the way for an escalation of Egyptian-tinged Arab nationalism, which was spread, in large part, by way of the classroom.

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[206] Abdel Nasser, Huda Gamal, *al-Majmu'a al-Kamila li-Khutub wa Tasrihaat al-Ra'iis Gamal Abdel-Nasser,* (Cairo: Al-Maktaba Al-Akademiyya, 2007), 458.

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[208] Tsourapas, "Nasser's Educators and Agitators," 325.

[209] Al-Gurg, *The Wells of Memory*, 18.

Little is written about the political atmosphere in the early modern Gulf states, and less is written about the political activity within its schools. These questions are most clearly addressed in memoirs, many of which are published by the United Arab Emirates' National Archives. One of these memoirs, titled *Tatawwur al-Ta'liim*, gives the firsthand account of a teacher in Kuwait. This teacher commemorates the lively atmosphere in one of Kuwait's first schools, the Qasimiyya school. He recalls: "The Qasimiyya School was not merely a school – it was a social, religious, political, and cultural center. Students did not graduate from this center having acquired mere information, rather they graduated… saturated with the spirit of *wataniyya* (nationalism) and *qawmiyya* (Pan-Arabism), and became thereafter outstanding leaders in many fields."[210] These fledgeling schools are remembered as centers of political activity, instilling Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism.

These ideologies, in the minds of students in the Gulf, were directly connected with Egypt. In the year 1956/57, "students, defending nationalist and Pan-Arab sentiment, provoked ... English officers,watched them pass by the school in their cars, and threw rocks at them, yelling: "Long live Gamal Abdel Nasser! May [British Prime Minister] Eden fall!"[211] Support for Egypt, and Pan-Arab sentiment, was perceived by students as a direct affront on British occupying forces. Political protests against "the presence of the British colonizer" were directly connected with support for the "overwhelming nationalist tide and for Nasserism."[212] Egypt was inspiring Arab patriotism and bolstering anti-western sentiment. Of course, every instance of student-led political fervor in the Gulf cannot be directly attributed to the activism of Egyptian teachers, but the protests were overwhelmingly inspired by Egyptian politics.

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[210] Al-Harbi, *Tatawwur al-Ta'liim fiy al-Emarat*, 92.
[211] Ibid., 96.
[212] Al-Sheikh, *Tariikh al-Ta'liim fiy as-Sharjah*, 89.

Similarly, in Dubai there occurred "numerous examples" of Egyptian teachers "inciting students and raising their awareness of Nasserism".[213] As several delegations of Egyptian teachers arrived in the Trucial States, Nasser's "militant Arab nationalism" spilled over, producing "strong reactions" to Arab victories like the nationalization of the Suez canal in 1956.[214] Even "young students in the schools of the Trucial States demonstrated, expressing their sympathy with Egypt in her fight against the Israeli invasion and British and French collaboration".[215]

United States Department of State correspondence details similar demonstrations in Kuwait, in which "less orderly groups varying in size from 50 to 300 sometimes comprised school children (presumably marching to or from school)".[216] It was suspected that these demonstrations were encouraged by both rising political temperatures throughout the Arab world and the specific encouragement of Egyptian teachers. Within Kuwaiti classrooms, "bellicose Nasserist rhetoric" had come to dominate textbooks, classroom instruction, and extracurricular activities.[217] Political activity quickly became overwhelming — the Kuwait government was "becoming concerned over continuation of these demonstrations" and was "putting blame squarely on the shoulders of the Egyptian Embassy, using Egyptian teachers to organize and encourage students and other elements to demonstrate in favor of Arab unity, Nasser, etc."[218] Egyptians were stirring support for revolutionary ideology in Kuwait's schools: the demonstrations were "sometimes comprised entirely of non-Kuwaiti Arabs carrying Arab Union

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[213] Davidson, *Dubai*, 41.
[214] Abdallah, *The United Arab Emirates: A Modern History*, 74.
[215] Ibid.
[216] United States Department of State, "Telegram from Kuwait," Document 492, UAE National Archives.
[217] Al-Rashoud, "Modern Education and Arab Nationalism in Kuwait," 279.
[218] United States Department of State, Doc. 492, UAE National Archives.

flags and pro-Nasser banners have taken place throughout Kuwait town".[219] This pro-Egypt activity was ignited by Arab immigrants to Kuwait. Egyptian teachers were "purposely trying to whip up public opinion" in favor of their home country and its Pan-Arab aspirations.[220]

Schools in the Gulf began to host cultural festivals, which were widely attended. The importance of national celebrations to post-colonial Arab identity is demonstrated by Elie Podeh, who explores "the creation of new cultural hybrids" related to Pan-Arabism.[221] His research underscores the conjunction of national and Arab loyalties at these festivals, explaining how celebrations "strengthened… the supra-national identity" while emphasizing "heroism and sacrifice in each state's historical narrative."[222] Thus, in the Arabian Peninsula, regional elements of Gulf culture could be celebrated while simultaneously lauding the larger Arab collective.

Festivals were opportunities to inculcate the local society with Arab nationalist values — in the case of Sharjah, "the Arab flags were flown at these festivals without exception — flags of the Arab league beside the flag of Sharjah."[223] The political victories of the Arabs were celebrated. British correspondent Elizabeth Monroe recalls a performance at a "recent school festival… acted by small boys who would never in the normal course have heard of Sinai," in which they "mimed attack on a tent adorned with Israel's star of David, a triumphal stoning and burning of it by fellow-pupils dressed as Egyptians".[224] It is not hard to imagine that this performance was coordinated by an Egyptian teacher. By opposing colonizing presence in the Middle East and heroizing Egyptian opposition, festival activities strengthened students' political

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[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Elie Podeh, *The Politics of National Celebrations in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 19.
[222] Ibid., 254.
[223] Muhammad Hassan Al-Harbi, *Tatawwur al-Ta'liim fiy al-Emarat al-'Arabiyya al-Mutahida, 1904-1971* (Abu Dhabi: National Archives of the United Arab Emirates, 2017), 92.
[224] Monroe, "Egypt's Empire Builders", 290.

allegiances and emphasized the Arab aspects of collective cultural identity. Students in the Gulf were being swept up in the larger Arab cause.

Image 5. *Uprising of students at the Qasimiyya schools throughout the Suez Crisis on Egypt in 1956.*[225]

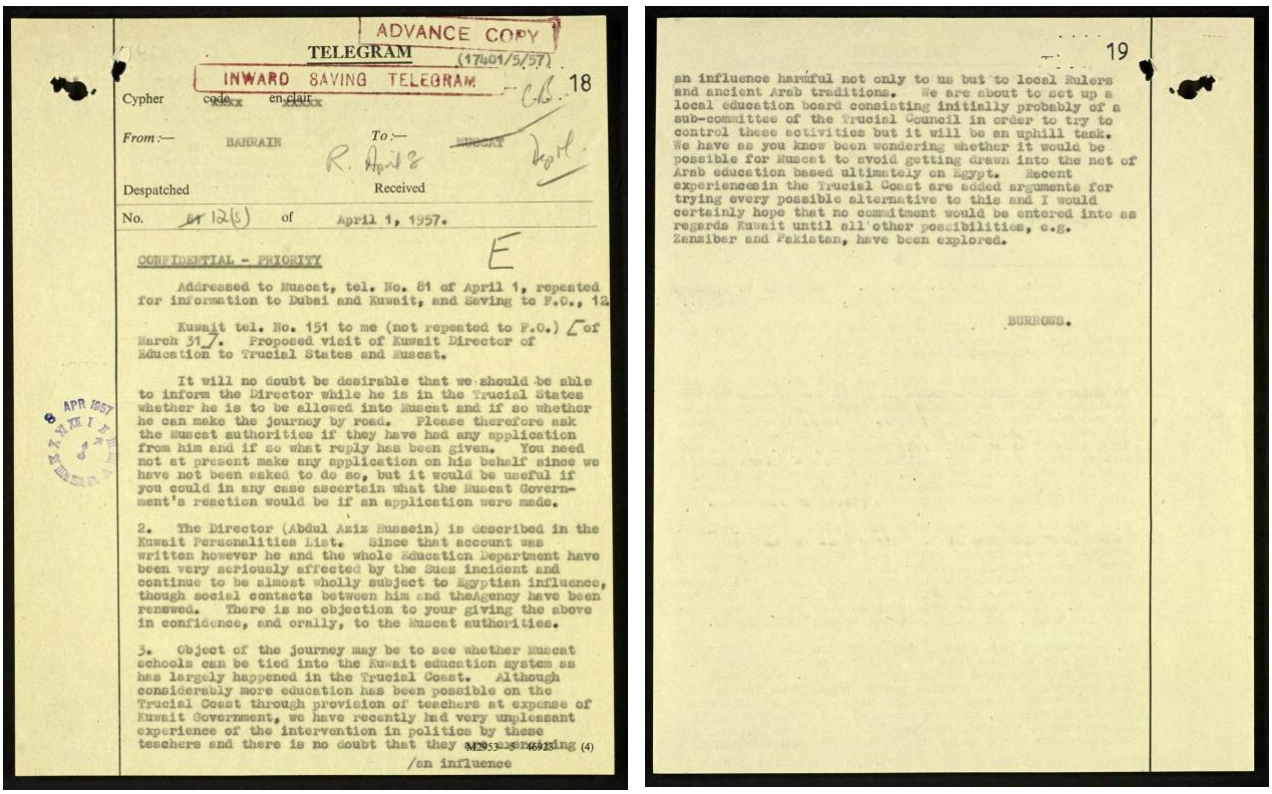
These demonstrations continued for several years. Mohammed Diab recalls that, eventually, "the festival was not restricted to the specified area beside the school; rather it extended and morphed into a demonstration that decried the British presence and called for its decline, and commemorated the life of the late leader Gamal Abdel Nasser."[226] Central to the festivals were speeches "about Arab nationalism — Nasser's version" that were "reminiscent of National Socialism and totalitarianism".[227]

Taking place in various cities, the unprecedented levels of widespread political activity are noted by historians as a epoch in the political history of the Gulf. These Gulf sources on mid-

[225] Al-Harbi, *Tatawwur al-Ta'liim fiy al-Emarat*, 95.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Donald Hawley, *The Emirates: Witness to a Metamorphosis* (Norfolk: Michael Russell, 2007), 295.

twentieth century Egyptian influence on political culture are corroborated by the British ones. In terms of British intelligence and policymaking, much was noted in terms of anti-Western sentiment and Nasserite political activity in the Gulf. One confidential British report read: "They [Egyptians] claim the cultural leadership of the Arab world and their main weapons are press, radio and education."[228] Just as Egyptian influence in the Gulf region was reaching new heights in the fifties, so was British. The Trucial States specifically had become the "site of expanding British investment" because of its "increasingly significant geostrategic location between Britain and the empire east of the Suez". Political power balances were shifting in the region, and British authorities were concerned with preserving their presence in the Gulf. Bernard Burrows, appointed British Political Resident in the Persian Gulf in 1953, predicted that it will be an "an uphill task" to prevent the Gulf states from "getting drawn into the net of Arab education based ultimately on Egypt".[229] Concerning the "Egyptian influence" in the educational establishment, Burrows reported to his superiors "the very unpleasant experience of the intervention in politics by these teachers". He portrays them as a threat, exercising "influence harmful to not only us [the British] but to local rulers and ancient Arab traditions."[230]

[228] "Middle East Oil Committee," October 13, 1955, The National Archives, CAB 134/1086, 273.
[229] "School teachers for Persian Gulf", 19.
[230] Ibid., 18.



ADVANCE COPY

TELEGRAM (17401/5/57)

INWARD SAVING TELEGRAM

18

Cypher code en clair

From:— BAHRAIN To:— MUSCAT

Despatched Received

No. 84 12(S) of April 1, 1957.

CONFIDENTIAL - PRIORITY

Addressed to Muscat, tel. No. 81 of April 1, repeated for information to Dubai and Kuwait, and Saving to F.O., 12.

Kuwait tel. No. 151 to me (not repeated to F.O.) of March 31. Proposed visit of Kuwait Director of Education to Trucial States and Muscat.

It will no doubt be desirable that we should be able to inform the Director while he is in the Trucial States whether he is to be allowed into Muscat and if so whether he can make the journey by road. Please therefore ask the Muscat authorities if they have had any application from him and if so what reply has been given. You need not at present make any application on his behalf since we have not been asked to do so, but it would be useful if you could in any case ascertain what the Muscat Government's reaction would be if an application were made.

2. The Director (Abdul Aziz Hussein) is described in the Kuwait Personalities List. Since that account was written however he and the whole Education Department have been very seriously affected by the Suez incident and continue to be almost wholly subject to Egyptian influence, though social contacts between him and the Agency have been renewed. There is no objection to your giving the above in confidence, and orally, to the Muscat authorities.

3. Object of the journey may be to see whether Muscat schools can be tied into the Kuwait education system as has largely happened in the Trucial Coast. Although considerably more education has been possible on the Trucial Coast through provision of teachers at expense of Kuwait Government, we have recently had very unpleasant experience of the intervention in politics by these teachers and there is no doubt that they [illegible] (4)

/an influence

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an influence harmful not only to us but to local Rulers and ancient Arab traditions. We are about to set up a local education board consisting initially probably of a sub-committee of the Trucial Council in order to try to control these activities but it will be an uphill task. We have as you know been wondering whether it would be possible for Muscat to avoid getting drawn into the net of Arab education based ultimately on Egypt. Recent experiences in the Trucial Coast are added arguments for trying every possible alternative to this and I would certainly hope that no commitment would be entered into as regards Kuwait until all other possibilities, e.g. Zanzibar and Pakistan, have been explored.

BURROWS.

Image 6. *A telegram containing Bernard Burrows' observations on the political activity of teachers in Kuwait and the Trucial Coast.*

Donald Hawley, a Political Agent in the Trucial States from 1958 to 1961, also experienced the growing influence of Egyptian political currents in the Gulf. He recorded that the politicization of schools started in the early grades with "the current practice of teaching the alphabet with 'G for Gamal' in the schools."[231]

The success of Egypt's attempts at regional influence was not uniform — Kuwait City and Sharjah eclipsed other Gulf cities in their national fervor. An employee of the British Residency in Bahrain notes that emigrant teachers in Qatar signed a "contract which includes a ban on participation in politics which we hope the Ruler will enforce."[232] Pan-Arabism was

[231] Hawley, *The Emirates*, 200.
[232] "School teachers for Persian Gulf", 36.

celebrated with different degrees of fervor throughout the Eastern Gulf states. Egyptian influence had made its mark throughout the Gulf, albeit with varying levels of intensity.

Violent action was occasionally taken under the banner of Arab nationalism. In 1956, around the time of the Suez Crisis, a group of students attempted to set fire to Sharjah's British air base.[233] British government correspondence also tells the account of a fire in Kuwait that was set by unnamed Arab nationalists. Though the details of the event were never uncovered, commentary on the Egyptian government's response to the issue was significant to British intelligence forces. They translated the December 13th message of Cairo's *Voice of the Arabs* region-wide radio broadcast:

> The battle (against the British imperialist aggression) continues. This was the meaning conveyed to the Arabs by blowing up the oil wells in Kuwait. Our brethren the Arabs of Kuwait wanted to bring to our ears the news that the battle has not ended. Remain vigilant, maintain your struggle, and retain your weapons. Remember always brethren, those who blew up the oil pipelines in Kuwait. They did so in order to sound a warning to you and illuminate for you the right path.[234]

This message, advocating violent revolution against the British and heroizing the acts of Kuwaiti nationalists, was broadcast throughout the Arab world by Egypt's government. British government intelligence notes that the "anti-British feeling...being assiduously stimulated from Egypt" was "evident from the participation of Kuwaiti nationalists" who were recently in Egypt. The *Voice of the Arabs* program boasted of the Kuwaitis' determination "to enter into the battle side by side with Egypt."[235] This radical nationalist agenda was directly supported by Kuwait's Educational Department.[236] In the eyes of the British, Gulf Arabs continued "to worship at the shrine of Nasser", who was playing the part of post-colonial representative of the Arabs. Thus,

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[233] Abdallah, *The United Arab Emirates: A Modern History*, 144.
[234] "Internal political situation in Kuwait", 8.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Al-Rashoud, "Modern Education and Arab Nationalism in Kuwait," 279.

they did not expect a return to stability in the territory.[237] The Egyptian message had penetrated the Gulf at both the individual and the institutional levels.

Egypt's educators made a long-lasting political impression upon the fledgeling Gulf states. In Nasserism, disenfranchised citizens of the British-occupied Gulf states had found "a fundamental, radical ideology" that led to "the politicization of broad groups of the populace and the entrenchment of the resistance movements".[238] Egypt had come to represent a powerful ideology, which was "a powerful catalyst in the process of state formation".[239] Though the influence of Nasser in the Arab world slowed after the events of 1967, and ended with his death in 1970, Egypt's political relationship with the Gulf — manifested through radio, newspapers, and education — left a permanent mark. Emirati historian Muhammad Abdallah recalls the fifties as a decade that saw "far-reaching change, not only in the social and cultural life, but also in political attitudes" of the Gulf.[240] The exportation of Nasserism, by way of Egyptian teaching staff, left an impact on the Gulf that far outlasted the period of direct Egyptian political influence in the region. The influential promotion of Arab unity encouraged the establishment of a centralized federation. The desire for national formation became particularly strong among the young educated generation, whose political vision led eventually to the creation of the United Arab Emirates.[241]

The decade of Nasserism in the Gulf left its mark on the world order of the late twentieth century. One British source compared post-revolutionary Egypt's political influence in Gulf society to an "alien plant" that "has taken so apparently firm a root in arid soil".[242] Indeed,

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[237] "Internal political situation in Kuwait", 4.
[238] Al-Naqeeb, *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula*, 128.
[239] Podeh and Winckler, *Rethinking Nasserism*, 200.
[240] Abdallah, *The United Arab Emirates: A Modern History*, 140.
[241] Ibid.
[242] "Internal political situation: Kuwait", 37.

though the Arab East and the Arab West had little in common, the post-colonial experience, ignited by Egypt's revolutionary foreign policy, united the Arab world for a brief moment. Nasser's brand of Pan-Arabism fanned the flames of nationalism in the Gulf, mobilizing a generation for the work of modern statecraft.

Conclusion

The memoirs of Victoria College, a renowned British secondary school in Alexandra, recount the post-revolution removal of Queen Victoria's portrait from the dining hall wall and its subsequent replacement with a picture of President Nasser. As the 1952 Revolution gained ideological momentum, more schools throughout the Arab world gave the lauded President a place of recognition on their walls. Taught the values of Pan-Arabism and Arab socialism, many Arab students grew up under the influence of Egypt's exported ideology.

Nasserism had taken hold in Egypt and was rapidly gaining influence in larger Arab circles. The classroom was a prime tool in Nasser's toolbox, expounding curriculum and exporting worldview that was designed to instill allegiance to the Arab cause — and to the Egyptian state. After the July Revolution in 1952, the newly instated regime began reshaping Egypt's domestic educational system. Building schools, training teachers, rewriting curriculum, and increasing government education expenditure, the Free Officers' government had set out to invest in Egypt's young generations. More than just providing an education, the revolutionary government was enforcing a new national perspective. The student's daily life had become saturated with political purpose — education had been elevated from a mere task to an important, even holy, duty. President Nasser's regime was shaping every future Egyptian citizen.

The Egyptian state's influence did not end there — Nasser had a wide reach, speaking with authority to the surrounding Arab world. In the Eastern Gulf, his message of post-colonial vindication and Arab unification resonated widely. This message was delivered through news articles, radio broadcasts, and expatriate Egyptian teachers. The school became the center of Arab nationalist activity in many early Gulf cities, encouraged by politically committed expatriate teachers.

In the 1952 Revolution, Egypt experienced a regime change and witnessed a radical transformation of government structure. More than this, the nation took on an ideology. Revolutionary Egypt was not a mere state — it had become a message. This message was spread by the classroom, reaching the far edges of the Arab circle.

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